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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Agency and creativity: An eye on gender identity in four Egyptian novels

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Applied Linguistics

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Master of Arts

By

Maha Mosalem

Under the supervision of Dr. Reem Bassiouney

May 2019

Acknowledgments

And say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge." (QS 20, p. 114). I thank Allah every single day for his blessings He has bestowed on me. Having been through this journey was not easy at all, but God gave me the courage and the perseverance to push forward. For that and for everything else, I am forever in Your debt.

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Abstract

For most scholars, agency is a term that has most traditionally been coined with free will, resistance, and intentionality (Giddens, 1979; Ahearn, 2001). In this study, however, the construct is examined from a linguistic perspective aiming at exploring its creative dimensions in relation to gender identity in four Egyptian novels; *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), and *faḡaf* (Passion). By adopting a mediated discourse analysis approach (MDA) (Scollon, 2002), this study examined the connections between discourse and action in social interactions. Using the grammatical, semantic, and discursive analysis, the examination focused on representations of agency emerging in contexts and dialogic interactions. For the grammatical investigation, the study followed Dixon's (1994) classification of the subject as well as the category of voice while the semantic strategies included the semantic roles of the subject, verb types, and sentence moods for an interpretation of further character dimension. In addition, three discourse strategies were utilized, i.e. dialogicality, parallelism, foregrounding and backgrounding, the aim of which was to understand the macro-context of subjects' actions. Based on this examination, the study identified five creative forms of agency characteristic of gender identity. For Amina in *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), agency is associated with her maternal powers, whereas agency is relevant to self-actualization for Layla in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door). For Amina's *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), the construct is associated with revenge. Finally, love and ambition are two terms through which the protagonist in *faḡaf* (Passion), Zaynab, exercised her power.

Keywords: agency, linguistic devices, grammatical categories, semantic roles, mediated discourse analysis, novels.

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List of Abbreviations

A Agent

MDA Mediated Discourse Analysis

O Object

S Subject

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Agency is a term that has gained significance in the field of applied linguistics due to its relevance to studies of gender, political, literary, and even educational discourse. Essentially, agency is a social construct often associated with individual's capacity for mediated-actions (Ahearn, 2001). In that sense, the social context has an important role in the interpretation of actions and the explanation of human experience. By definition, the term implies the inseparability of actions and language as a medium through which subjects are framed. To highlight this relationship, the current study seeks to highlight the linguistic devices through which agency is exercised and devised as depicted in four Egyptian novels with a major focus on its relevance to gender identity. Toward that end, this study follows Duranti's (2004) suggestion that by depicting the agentive relationships among speakers, such as in a speech event or a story, they constantly construct different types of social beings capable of encoding each other's actions.

To introduce the construct and its relevance to this study, the following discusses the theoretical background of agency as embodied in language and social context. The aim of which is to highlight some of the approaches to the interpretation of agency relevant to gender identity and narrative discourse. The chapter also provides a statement of the research problem, research questions, delimitations, and other pertinent theoretical and operational definitions relevant to this study.

1.1.1. Agency (Language, Power, and Social Structure)

The concept of agency is multi-dimensional and coincides with different aspects of language and cultural practices. That is to say, any form of speaking assumes some kind of

agency since it already establishes the potential of affecting the hearer regardless of the speaker's purpose and the intended audience (Duranti, 2004). Thus, the interaction among speakers and interlocutors is what constitutes language as a medium of power in delivering actors' goals and emphasizing their own will. But individuals' power is not isolated from societal institutions, i.e. "roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures" (Turner, 1997, p. 6), and their relevant constraints and impositions. In social structure, institutions have the capacity to make a change, not only on themselves, but also on other institutions and individuals (Giddens, 1979). Thus, "institutions do indeed 'result' from human agency: but they are the outcome of action only in so far as they are also involved recursively as the medium of its production" (Giddens, 1979, p. 95).

For most scholars, defining agency is problematic since the term has various interpretations that are textually contained and socially mediated. Ahearn (2001) describes agency as "*the socioculturally mediated capacity to act*" (p. 112), a definition that renders itself to language as a social action in terms of its production and interpretation. Past research associated agency with concepts such as free will, male dominance, and resistance of patriarchal authority. These perceptions, Ahearn argues, voice only a one-directional approach to the concept of agency while undermining the creative process by which actors behave in an unanticipated fashion to eventually devise their own power.

1.1.2. Agency and Gender Identity

Other approaches addressed the relation between agency and language from the perspective of gender and the constitution of identity. In various studies, agency has been interpreted as a form of resistance to male dominance, a perception that influenced gender ideologies for decades and encouraged scholars to examine the category of women in terms of power relations. For instance, Butler (2011) explains that there are a number of questions on what constitutes women as a common identity; however, Butler indicates that "gender is

“constructed,” but implied in her formulation ... an agent, a cogito, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender” (p. 12). The association of gender as a mutable subject is closely linked to ideologies of agency and language as a means of perpetuating, reproducing, and transforming perceptions that can exclude or subordinate women. Butler’s view suggests disregarding the negative understanding of women in terms of fixed inherent attributes and rethinking of women in terms of the emancipatory perceptions of remodeled identities. Towards that end, the discursive and linguistic analysis of this study reiterates this reconfiguration and suggests rethinking of women as agents capable of transforming and changing their current status.

1.1.3. Agency, Gender Identity, and Narratives

Narrative discourse is a constituent of social interaction interspersed with conceptions of ideological and social beliefs. Thornborrow (2013) explains that “storytelling is integral to the way we structure, account for and display our understanding of our human condition and experience” (p. 51). In that sense, narrative becomes a fundamental mode of social life that highlights the constant change of human experience through mediated discourse. The temporality of the human condition, therefore, corresponds with the changeable nature of the construction of identity as “neither completely in flux nor static; it has the dynamic unity of narrative configuration” (McNay, 2013, p. 89). Thus, narratives relate individuals’ identities to societal factors, i.e. “that is the view of storytelling as practice...to capture the embedding of narrative within different contexts beyond conversations and interviews” (De Fina, 2015, p. 360).

The construction of narrative, again, reminds us of the changeable nature of gender which, according to Butler, is performative. Therefore, to put these concepts into perspective, narrative becomes the context in which the transformative aspect of gender agency takes place whether by defying or complying with the status quo.

To conclude, having displayed the theoretical background to the construct in terms of language, gender, and narrative, I present in the following section a detailed account of the linguistic approach adopted in this study which examines agency and gender identity in four Arabic novels tracing the development of Egyptian women's agency since 1919 all through modern time.

1.2. Statement of Research Problem

Under the overarching theme of gender identity lies the theoretical construct of agency. Through linguistic examination, this study explores four main characters in Arabic novels in terms of their capabilities as agents to defy their present situations and possibly establish their own norms. These novels are *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) by Naguib Mahfouz, *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door) by Latifa Al-Zayyat, *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man) by Noor Abdul Majeed, and *ʔaḡaf* (Passion) by Rasha Adli.

In terms of selection, these novels were chosen in particular due to the authors' unique linguistic approach to the depiction of women agency, each at their own time period. Gender has always been a controversial topic in most Egyptian novels and the protagonists, here, have distinct linguistic techniques in the negotiation of their agency; given the constraints and the durability of certain forms of gender identity as perceived by the authors. Therefore, the contribution of this study is to provide a linguistic approach that investigates the creative processes of agency by which the protagonists contrive their new and individual identities.

To conclude, this study considers the impact of linguistic repertoire as an investigative tool of social condition in establishing innovative facets of agency transcending the conventional ideologies of free will, resistance, and subversion of male dominance.

1.3. Research Questions

This study focuses on examining agency and gender identity in four Arabic novels through linguistic and discursive analysis of the protagonists' discourse. The following are the research questions:

1. What are the creative dimensions of agency in performing gender identity in the discourse of *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), and *ʔaḡaḡ* (Passion)?
 - a) How do grammatical structures represent manifestations of gender in relation to agency?
 - b) How does the investigation of the semantic strategies, i.e. subject semantic roles, verb types, and sentence moods, reflect the role of gender in relation to agency?
 - c) What are the discursive strategies employed by the authors for the depiction of the protagonists as social agents?

1.4. Delimitations

Primarily, this study seeks to reveal creative dimensions of agency through the examination of subjects' linguistic repertoire, grammatically, semantically, and discursively. Grammatically, the classification of subjects' roles will be delineated in terms of subject, agent, and object in addition to the category of voice (active or passive). On the other hand, the semantic categories include subjects' roles (agent, actor, perceiver, instrument, and patient/undergoer) and verb connotations (stative or action verbs), and sentence moods (indicative, imperative, or subjunctive...etc.). This study also considers the discursive practices of the protagonists in order to highlight how agency is sustained, appropriated, and challenged in social practice.

It is worth mentioning that the study does not seek to examine the code choice and authors' motivations for code-switching between Standard Arabic (SA) and Egyptian

Colloquial Arabic (ECA). In addition, it is not the intention of the analyst to provide an understanding of agency in its traditional forms associated with male dominance and resistance to power. It, however, aims to present a different dimension by which protagonists surpass their immediate sphere to alter conventionalized norms and values.

1.5. Definitions of Terms

1.5.1. Theoretical Definitions of Constructs

An Act

An Act is “a certain nexus of temporal horizons, the condensation of an iterability that exceeds the moment it occasions” (Butler, 1997, p. 14).

Actor

Actor - “refers to a person whose action is rule-governed or rule-oriented” (Karp, 1986, p. 137).

Agency

Agency - closely related to human identity

Agency is...the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome) (Duranti, 2004, p. 453).

Agent

Agents are entities whose actions are willfully and purposefully performed (Lyons, 1977). The consequences of such actions affect, not only themselves but other entities as well. Agents’ goals behind such actions vary and “such variation is responsible for the degree of agency that is attributed to a given entity and also for the type of evaluation they may receive” (Duranti, 2004, p. 454).

Creativity of Action

Creativity – is a productive construct to the understanding of agency that indicates that “when faced with complexity and difference, individuals may respond in unanticipated and innovative ways which may hinder, reinforce or catalyse social change” (McNay, 2013, p. 5).

Gender

Gender – “Gender is treated as the accomplishment and product of social interaction. The focus is on the way individuals "do" or "perform" their gender identity in interaction with others, and there is an emphasis on dynamic aspects of interaction.” (Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2008, p. 11).

Gender Identity

Gender Identity – “gender identity develops as a relatively stable, pre-discursive trait, which resides in individuals and which is more or less salient, depending on its relevance to a particular social context” (Weatherall and Gallois, 2003, P. 488).

Linguistic Repertoire

Linguistic Repertoire – “is a general concept which allows us to compare any two communities in terms of the way in which internal speech distribution reflects social structure, regardless of any pre-established criteria of linguistic homogeneity or heterogeneity”. (Gumperz, 1965, p. 85).

Discourse Resources

Foregrounding and backgrounding - “relative prominence in discourse...the analogy is of a figure seen against a background (and the rest of the text is often referred to as backgrounding)” (Crystal, 2008, p. 194).

Dialogicity - Du Bois (2007) explains that this discourse tool ties the words previously spoken to the current utterances across “the horizons of language”.

Parallelism - is defined by Johnstone (2008) as the predictable conscious or unconscious cognitive strategy, which occurs when two words or phrases are placed within the same or similar grammatical context leading to establishing the relationship between the two.

Sentence Moods

Sentence moods – “mood conveys the speaker’s attitude toward the factual content of the sentence” (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 2016, p. 25). It involves the declarative, sometimes called indicative) (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 2016), interrogative, imperative, exclamatory, and subjunctive moods.

The Category of Voice

The category of voice – is a category “which uses a form of the verb to tell us whether the subject is the actor or is acted upon” (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 2016, p. 351).

1.5.2. Operational Definitions of Constructs

Agency

Agency – to operationalize the construct, the linguistic and semantic resources as well as the discursive strategies are analyzed in all four novels. The investigation includes grammatical categories and voice in addition to subjects’ semantic roles, verb types, and sentence moods. Butler (1997) states that “the one who acts...acts precisely to the extent that he or she is constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset” (p. 16).

As for the discursive tools, this study highlights how the use of strategies such as foregrounding and backgrounding, dialogicality...etc. contextualize the situation and depicts how the protagonists perceive their own power.

Dialogicality

Dialogicality – To analyze the social frame of the utterances, this discourse tool relates previously mentioned discourse to the current context for relevance and cultural associations.

Foregrounding and backgrounding

Foregrounding and backgrounding – In order to highlight some of the major instances in which agency is possibly attributed, exercised, devised, or denied, this discourse strategy underpins the dominant pattern in the text as opposed to another looming in the background.

Parallelism

Parallelism – Another discursive strategy that emphasizes specific cognitive associations of the construct of agency through similar grammatical constructions of two words or phrases highlighting their relationship.

The Creative role of agency

The creative role of agency – This study provides a different account of agency through investigating the linguistic and discursive resources by which characters struggle, resist, and appropriate societal and cultural impositions to devise their own norms and possibly invoking social change.

Grammatical Structures

Grammatical Structures – The linguistic analysis adopts Dixon's (1994) classification of the subject in relation to agency, i.e. *S* (subject), *A* (agent), and *O* (object). *S* refers to the subject of an intransitive verb, *A* denotes the agent of a transitive verb, and *O* stands for object of a transitive verb. The category of voice, i.e. active or passive, is among the

grammatical features examined in the novels to describe the relationship between actions expressed by the verbs and the participants, whether subjects or objects.

Semantic Strategies

Semantic Strategies – For the semantic analysis, this study follows Duranti's (1994) division of semantic roles:

*“Agent **Pabi** read the book.*

*Actor **Shiva** danced.*

*Perceiver **Tika** heard the news.*

*Instrument **The stone** broke the window.*

*Patient/Undergoer **The old woman** died”* (Duranti 1994, pp. 122–123)

The study also examines verb types, i.e. action or stative, and sentence moods (indicative, imperative, subjunctive...etc.) to highlight actors' attitudes towards the content of the utterances.

Discourse Strategies

Discourse Strategies – This study aims to analyze how agency is exercised, attributed, or devised by identifying the following discursive features:

1. Foregrounding and backgrounding.
2. Dialogicality.
3. Parallelism.

Such analysis marks the interconnectedness between events and entities who have possibly caused them (Duranti, 2004).

Sentence Moods

Sentence moods – The study investigates the subject's attitudes towards the propositional content through the classification of the sentence moods, i.e. indicative, imperative, interrogative, exclamatory, or subjunctive.

The Category of Voice

The category of voice - For this study, the linguistic examination includes identifying the subject in terms of verb form to indicate whether it is the actor or being acted upon.

1.6. List of Abbreviations

A	Agent
O	Object
MDA	Mediated Discourse Analysis
S	Subject

1.7. Summary of Chapter

As an introduction to the study, this chapter provides an extensive background to the theoretical framework of agency in terms of its relevance to language as a social construct, gender identity, and the narrative context. In addition, the reader is introduced to the aim of the study which is to highlight how linguistic devices identify creative dimensions of agency as perceived by the authors of four Egyptian novels; *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door), *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), and *ʔaḡaf* (Passion). The chapter also tackles the theoretical and operational definitions important to this study to facilitate the interpretation of the data analysis provided in chapter four. Within this introductory framework, the chapter highlights the fact that the examination of code-switching from Standard Arabic (SA) and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic (ECA) is not investigated in this study due to its irrelevance to the primary variable in this study, i.e. agency.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The term agency has its roots in many different disciplines from anthropology to sociology, among others. For example, the construct is relevant to anthropologists whose studies focus on humans' physiological and social endowments, such as language, culture, etc. Recently, issues surrounding language and agency have been of interest to linguistic anthropologists, social theorists, and applied linguists who are concerned with agency as it emerges in discourse. This has prompted an ample of research on language as a social action, agency as practice theory, as well as dialogic approaches to the analysis of gender and agency.

This chapter discusses the construct of agency from the perspectives of sociology and linguistics. First, the chapter focuses on prominent perspectives of agency as a social construct, after which a discussion of the theoretical definitions should follow. Furthermore, reflections on the intersections of the construct with other variables such as gender and narratives are also explored. The chapter, then, presents empirical studies on the term in linguistic, literary, and finally educational discourse to highlight key research areas in this field.

2.2. Agency as a Social Construct

The emergence of agency in social theory is credited to renowned social theorists such as Anthony Giddens (1979) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990, and 2000). The construct is historically related to Giddens' (1979) theory of structuration, which proposes that "*every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member*" (p. 5). By positing such assumption, Giddens presumes that social

agents are well aware of their social systems which constitute and reproduce social action. But this theory does not assume a mere knowledge of the social conditions. Giddens states that social actors draw on their 'stocks of knowledge' and discursively penetrate the social systems to which they contribute. Furthermore, Giddens proposes that the degree and scope of such penetration is an aspect of '*an intrinsic relation between agency and power*'. In that sense, language is enmeshed within social life in which

However subordinate an actor may be in a social relationship, the very fact of involvement in that relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other. Those in subordinate positions in the social system are frequently adept at converting whatever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of those social systems. (Giddens, 1979, p. 6)

With such take on discourse and social relations, Giddens emphasizes the fact that power and human agency are intrinsically related. Yet one, as Giddens argues, should not regard agency as a discrete set of combined actions, but rather a continuation of the same behavior in which "social systems are produced as transactions between agents, and can be analysed as such on the level of strategic conduct" (p. 95). Agents, i.e. participants in these transactions, consist of an autonomous agent and a dependent actor. Giddens underpins the fact that even in the most autonomous situations, an agent retains some degree of dependence and the same applies to the dependent actor. The characteristics of the intrinsic relation between power and human agency indicate how agency contributes to the reproduction of social systems and the role of language as a catalyst of change.

Apart from Giddens' theory of structuration, plenty of social theorists discussed the analysis of agency within a sociological framework. One of the most influential theories was produced by Bourdieu (1977, 1990, and 2000), who coined the term *habitus*, originally used in anthropology. The habitus refers to "principles which generate and organize practices and

representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 53). The theory suggests that each agent produces and reproduces social meaning without the intentionality to perform such an act. The concept of the habitus stirs agency away from the idea of free will as Bourdieu proposes that what subjects do has more meaning because they do not actually know what they are doing. Hence, the habitus is a ‘universalizing mediation’ causing an agent’s practices to be sensible without actual intent or explicit reason.

What relates Bourdieu’s habitus to agency is an assumption that “agents shape their aspirations according to concrete indices of the accessible and the inaccessible, of what is and is not ‘for us’” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 64). In fact, the habitus embodies a set of (pre)dispositions, a system of the past oriented towards the present and perpetuates to the future, preventing the emergence of new sociocultural products. Agents inevitably are destined to think and act in a manner that reproduces the existing social system “the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). Hence, the habitus rules out the possibility of social resistance and social change.

2.3. Defining Agency

Many scholars in many fields have been interested in agency as an abstract concept. The term coincides with many fields in humanities, linguistics, and social sciences. For this reason, defining the term has posed a sort of dilemma for many scholars across the board (Ahearn, 2010). In the past, questions about human agency arose in an attempt to explain the role of language and social practices in the reproduction and the transformation of social norms and values. A recent view on the term, Ahearn (2010), provided a provisional definition linking human intentions and capacities to action. In other words, “*agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act*” (Ahearn, 2010, p. 28). In most cases, Ahearn

states that agency is a construct that has been constantly synonymous with “free will” and “resistance” ruling out the social nature of the concept and the pervasive role of culture on human actions. A perspective resonated by Mahmood (2005), who argues that “we think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (p. 192).

Mahmood’s (2005) definition of agency is also of importance in this study since she identifies agency with issues of gender discourse; a focal point in this research. She drew on major work in the 1970s which primarily focused on human agency within structures of male dominance and subordination. In reality, feminists have sought to highlight women’s rejection of male dominance by subverting the hegemonic social practices and recycling them for their own hidden agendas. She argues that such a shallow account of the study of women as agentive “seems to stand in for a sometimes repressed, sometimes active feminist consciousness, articulated against the hegemonic male cultural norms” (p. 195). Instead, she puts forth power as a strategic force penetrating social life to produce new forms of relations, objects, and discourses. To conclude, her definition of agency is not synonymous with resistance to male dominance but the possibility of action amidst forces of subordination and social constraints.

In addition to Mahmood (2005), other scholars have explained the concept of agency and language in tandem. Duranti (2004), for instance, pointed out that agency is involved in any act of speaking regardless of the intentions and interests of both the speaker and the hearer. He explains that the act of speaking establishes, what he calls, a reality with the potential of leaving an impact on whoever happens to be listening. Towards providing a working definition of agency, Duranti identifies the term as

the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their

own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome). (p. 453)

In this definition, Duranti (2004) offers three interconnected properties. First, the notion of control over someone's behavior, which is closely related to the notion of power. Second, the performative aspect of agency in which power is implicitly indicated. Meanwhile, the third criterion poses the idea of the actor's freedom of the possibility to act differently and hence becoming 'the object of evaluation'.

Whether the context is real or imaginary, Duranti points out the importance of the notion of evaluation and highlights three types of evaluation. The first type assumes that the speaker is 'a moral subject' whose words are evaluated based on their contribution to self-realization. The second evaluation is based on someone's contribution to social and cultural-specific acts. The third type is related to the evaluation of the speaker's ability to display linguistic competence. In all three types, speakers are involved with their audience in a process without which evaluation would lose its meaning. In addition, Duranti underpins a crucial aspect of agency which is that

agents are entities whose actions have consequences for themselves or others...The extent to which such actions are performed willfully and with specific goals in mind varies. Such variation is responsible for the *degree* of agency that is attributed to a given entity and also for the type of evaluation he may receive. (Duranti, 2004, p. 454)

2.4. Agency and Language

The grammatical representation of agency in discourse is concomitant with the identity of the subject. According to Dixon (1994), the concept of agency is related to the idea of 'control' since any event that involves more than one participant assumes that there

is one entity 'subject' that controls the action/activity. In fact, "subject is a universal category, having a vital role in the grammar of every language" (Dixon, 1994, p. 112). The semantic-syntactic relations of subject (S), agent (A), and object (O) are achieved through the role of 'subject' in linking functions from transitive and intransitive types. Dixon proposes that this grammatical classification divides events and hence a grammatical requirement, here, is that an intransitive verb has one verb and one noun phrase (NP), while a transitive verb contains one verb and two obligatory noun phrases (NP). To further analyze the 'subject', Dixon identifies the semantic role of the participant in any speech act as "Agent and Target for the affect type; Donor, Gift and Recipient for giving; Receiver, Addressee, and Message for speaking" ...etc. (Dixon, 1994, p. 114). These semantic roles are identified within the basic syntactic structure of every language; an assumption that is duly utilized in this study.

The relation between language and agency has been discussed in previous research. Several scholars took an interest in how agency is enacted in language and the linguistic representation it entails. Duranti's (2004) proposed an approach to understanding agency that included two distinct dimensions: 'linguistic realization (performance)' and 'linguistic representation (grammatical encoding)'. Both dimensions are dependent on each other since the enactment of agency, i.e. performance, is depicted through linguistic means, i.e. encoding. What Duranti identified is the constitutive nature of language in depicting agency as speakers of a speech event participate in the production of certain social and moral realities. Hence, Duranti (2004) tapped into an important correlation between language and individual's affective stances in the establishment of social and moral types; a major focus in this study.

To continue on the same discussion, Duranti (2004) points out that the performative aspect of agency can be classified into two categories; ego-affirming and act-constituting. As for ego-affirming, "language use implies that its users are entities that must also possess other

human qualities including the ability to affect their own and others' ways of being" (p. 455). Therefore, Duranti indicates that the use of performative verbs and their conjugation in the first person singular, e.g. *I order you to, I inform you that...* etc. is a means by which any type of act intended by the speaker can be analyzed. For the second dimension of encoding agency, Duranti proposed a set of generalizations when it comes to language structure and use, 1) all languages have the linguistic means of representing agency, 2) the means by which agency is encoded is diversified across languages, and 3) there are ways of mitigating agency in all languages through "a number of grammatical and discourse strategies, including omission (i.e. no mention of agent at all) and alternative grammatical framings (e.g. variation in the expressed connection between an event and the entity that might have caused it)" (Duranti, 2004, p. 460).

Duranti (2004) based his analysis of linguistic agency on several empirical studies, one of which was in (1990). Both Duranti and Ochs (1990) investigated the connection between participants' action and certain processes in Samoan political discourse. The aim of the study was to highlight the means by which agency is grammatically expressed denoting a dichotomy in Samoan's social practices. The context of this study was a social event in Samoa called the fono in which high-ranking individuals gather for a judiciary meeting to remedy a crisis. In this study, several morpho-syntactic elements of Samoan grammar were analyzed to examine the semantic roles of key participants and how events are framed in these political events. The linguistic analysis, here, aimed at exploring the assignment of agency through the use of particular grammatical forms indexing participants' political roles as authoritative agents.

In addition to the linguistic analysis, Duranti and Ochs' examined the nature of the referent and the strategic use of implicit and explicit assignment of responsibility. For example, the meaning of the verbs, as well as the discourse context contribute to the

constitution of agency in acts of praise, recognition of authority and even acts of condemnation. For such purpose, the discourse examined three linguistic strategies: “mention of human agents via alternative case marking, self or other-abasement formulas in transitive clauses, and reported speech” (Duranti and Ochs, 1990, p. 655). In their findings, Duranti and Ochs (1990) found that various members of fono establish their political weight through the frequent use of ergative agents of transitive clauses and hence establishing their identities as active social agents. Based on this model, the current study adopts a similar linguistic analysis to the social assignment of agency, the aim of which is to explore actors’ abilities to transform their social norms and practices.

In a later study, Keating and Duranti (2006) conducted research on agency in language in two distinct societies, Pohnpei and Samoa. They proposed that the use of a particular set of linguistic forms, “honorifics”, and other semiotic resources contribute to the understanding of power dynamics and individuals’ ranking in social relationships. Keating and Duranti analyzed honorifics language based on the grammatical marking of status “(i) who is referred to, (ii) who is addressed, and (iii) who is overhearing (bystander)” (p. 147). In both communities, the hierarchical relationships are dependent on the speakers’ linguistic resources, for example, “‘come’ has four different ranges of status ‘kohdo (‘come’ unmarked for status), patohdo (‘come’, referent of subject = low status), ketdo (‘come’, referent of subject = high status)” (p. 148). Their findings showed that the choice of sentences “when honorific forms are used, the same action or state may be expressed in a coordinated structure ..., each of which is marked for a different status of the referent” (p. 154). Furthermore, their analysis revealed three fundamental interconnected properties in constituting social hierarchy: 1) ‘creativity, 2) the establishment of particular participant roles, and 3) the exploitation of multiple semiotic resources’.

Other research on the correlation between language and agency was presented in Johansen's (2011) study on the concepts of agency, responsibility, and the notion of participation in language socialization. Johansen emphasized the role of agency in the determination of speakers' positioning within the notion of participation. The data utilized for this study were extracted from two narratives of Danish families' dinner table. The analysis aimed at establishing a relationship between agency, responsibility, and the notion of participation by focusing on the syntactical operations for transforming direct speech into indirect one with special focus on connectives, speakers' linguistic techniques for using direct and indirect speech as well as prosodic means. The investigation of these linguistic devices was based on Duranti's (2004) theory of performativity and encoding of agency, the results of which revealed that reported speech positions speakers as interactive participants to either strengthen or mitigate their agency and hence their responsibility. In addition, "participants consider the speaker as an agent and thus consider the agent accountable for the effects and consequences of those acts" (Johansen, 2011, p. 2585). This study as well as all of the aforementioned highlight the importance of linguistic analysis in the encoding of agency as performed within a constructed social system.

2.5. Agency and Gender Identity

The previous discussion on agency suggests that there are a cluster of issues pertaining to the construct, one of which is gender. Meyerhoff (2014) explains gender by indicating that

One is not simply a woman; one is a woman who is a member of a family...a woman who is a member of social groups (a tennis player, a yachtie, a member of the film society), and so forth. How gender is enacted in all those spheres of our lives makes us "women" or "men," and provides us with a repertoire – partly shared with others –

that creates not only gendered styles that have meaning across individuals, but also personal styles that may be more or less gendered (p. 97).

This proposition works towards the configuration of gender as a matter of language choice that constructs social behavior. This approach also denotes that gender is no longer viewed in fixed terms constituted by society but as a set of activities that allow actors a great deal of agency in the linguistic choices they make (Ortner 1996). Thus, with these realizations, we are encouraged to rethink of gender in terms of dynamic and endless possibilities sustained by social means.

The resignification of gender in terms of linguistic possibilities of social behavior prompted a rethinking of agency as synonymous with constructs such as, free will, resistance, and other emancipatory associations. In the past, many feminist theorists regarded agents as ‘doers’ without which there can be no transformation of relations of domination within society. To Butler (2010), however, agency is ‘the iterability of performativity’, i.e. social norms are stabilized by virtue of their repeated representation. McNay (2013) pointed out that such take on agency rules out individuals’ creative capabilities to change and transform when faced with complexities and differences. These perspectives on gender and agency triggered another alternative that called for a revised understanding of agency underpinning gender’s capacities for autonomous acts in the face of cultural impositions and social inequalities.

Another aspect proposed by Butler (2010) is that there are predetermined criteria by which the subjects themselves are linguistically formed. Such constraints are set out within cultural discourse and built into the language in order to rule out other creative and imaginable dimensions of gender agency. Hence, gender identity is emphasized through the discursive construction of women as social subjects, whether it be male dominance and female subordination, resistance and emancipatory perceptions, or other circulated accounts

of gender in discourse. In her take on gender, Butler (2010) states that “the linguistic fiction of “sex,” ...is a category produced and circulated by the system of compulsory heterosexuality in an effort to restrict the production of identities along the axis of heterosexual desire” (p. 35). In the following studies, conceptions of agency and gender discourse are displayed in an attempt to reflect on past research and the contribution of this present study.

Ahearn (2004) conducted a case study on gender and agency in Nepal in which she highlighted the role of literacy as a catalyst for social change. She argued that during the 1990s, the increase in female literacy in Junigau caused the emergence of new means of courtship involving love letters and self-initiated marriages. Through the examination of Junigau written sources, Ahearn identifies the emergence of new gender ideologies as well as new perceptions of the villagers’ agency and social power, especially for women. Ahearn assumes that literacy is an important factor in shaping the lived experiences of the Junigau community through the influence of government textbooks, novels, magazines, and female literacy books on women’s love letters at the time. Analysis of these letters revealed a new shift of ideology from the traditional perceptions of arranged marriages to new practices of elopement and self-initiated marriages.

Examination of the impact of female literacy on the social practices of women at the time in Nepal revealed that literacy does not entail power. It rather underlies new prevalent perceptions regarding agency in Junigau love letters. Her case study demonstrated that women used their newly acquired literacy skills to write love letters that cultivated the idea of elopement and noting that “such distressing outcomes ... belie the simplistic notion of literacy as a neutral skill of empowerment” (Ahearn, 2004, p. 313). A close reading of new literacy practices and development discourses in Nepal has proven that the effect of literacy on new ideologies of social forces is inevitable. Overall, what Ahearn offered, here, is a

textual approach to the analysis of agency and its impact on social transformation and social change; an approach adopted in this study.

Previous research on gender and agency has also tackled some of the conceptual frameworks women encounter. Mahmood (2006) explored the notion of human agency and women's participation in the Islamist movement by examining a Cairene women's mosque movement in Cairo. These women were from several socioeconomic backgrounds who gather for the sake of learning about Islamic scriptures and social practices. Mahmood's perspective on agency is in many ways relevant to the present study since her take on agency is not synonymous with resistance and domination. Her analysis rendered agency as an ability to act in response to historical relations of subordination, which would eventually lead them to create their own norms. Through examining the discourse of four lower-middle-class working women, Mahmood tapped into religious concepts of shyness (*al-haya?*) and the veil (*hijab*). This investigative study about religious piety of Egyptian women explored different facets of agency apart from the logic of resistance and male dominance and cultivated in the concept of endurance to struggles against gender inequality.

From decades ago all through the twenty-first century, plenty of research focused on the examination of discourse and agency in association with resistance and social reform. A recent study by Friesen (2013) examined girls' reflections on issues of gender, power, and agency through their discourses on their sports participation in an after-school program in Namibia. Sport is a terrain in which gender faces many challenges and stratified beliefs on women's involvement in sports activities. Through discourse analysis, Friesen investigated girls' conversations within a wider social context that reflected perceptions of gender inequality and traditional views of women in Namibia. Based on her analysis of the data, Friesen was able to shed light on how agency is expressed within dominant and cultural

discourses and to illuminate on issues of ambiguity and resistance to the traditional views of women at the time.

Friesen's (2013) data revealed representations of agency as a capability for change and growth "I've changed the way I am" (p. 110), said by one of the participants. Revelations of this sort demonstrate two key points for the workings of agency and gender perceptions; one of them is the self-awareness of agency as a form of social development, and secondly the instability of identity despite its complex processes. Evidently, the emergence of agency in the girls' narratives was demonstrated in one of two ways; 1) the use of declarative statements, 2) or through their tones, attitudes, and behavior. Overall, Friesen has proven that "girls' strong belief in their personal change and growth ...demonstrates how girls can assert their agency, resist oppressive discourses and relations, and shape their own realities" (p. 112), one of the many facets of agency that this chapter intends to present as a contribution to this current study.

Finally, an important concept to focus on in this study is the consideration of the dynamics of agency in discourse. A recent study on Israeli women offenders by Gueta and Chen (2016) explored the narratives of eleven female prisoners' path to crime and drug abuse for an understanding of the dimensions of agency, gender, and victimization. The researchers drew on socially constructed local discourses to demonstrate that individuals, in choosing a certain discourse within a limited social position, are, in fact, agents. Their results revealed two discourses; one is 'victimization discourse' as a means of self-medicating following past experiences and the other is 'the agency discourse' as a means to experience pleasure and control their destiny. In terms of 'agency discourse', the revelation indexed personal responsibility, on the one hand, and also self-blame and guilt on the other. Moreover, their findings proved that in some cases, participants used a mix of both discourses presenting a model of 'gender dualism' which demonstrated their agency as well as the instable nature of

their gender identity. In that sense, this research resembles the approach adopted in this study which seeks to prove the changeable nature of gender identity in relation to agency and power relations.

2.6. Narratives of Gender and Agency in Literary Discourse

Understanding gender and agency is historically related to the world of narration for “narrative is a category of social life” (McNay, 2013, p. 85) and an essential component that displays and projects human condition and experience. Therefore, narratives are of central importance to our understanding of human actions and the development of our identities, which are in constant reconfiguration through time. Through the indirect discourse of narration, identities are created in meaningful, and yet variable dimensions, as an eternal evolvement of the self. Hence, for all intents and purposes, the context of narration is key to the analysis of gender identity, which “offers a fuller account of the creative and autonomous aspects of agency” (McNay, 2013, p. 85).

The role of narratives in the studies of gender identity is key for its documentation of the reality of social life in which women are able to defy or comply with patriarchal norms and constraints of the society (McNay, 2013). In turn, narrative becomes an instrument by which gender identity is understood and the female subject position is placed amidst all kinds of challenges and societal constraints. This view of narration is what prompted the investigation of gender and agency in this context and provided a set of rich analyzable data that are traceable through time as a repository of knowledge. This perspective has been in various ways actualized proving that “narration can be an excellent vehicle for constructing, as well as reflecting, identity or at least a facet of it” (Bassiouny, 2015, p. 241). In the following, a detailed account of the connection between gender, agency, and narrative is provided after which several empirical studies on these constructs is enlisted in relevance to the current study.

The relation between narratives and gender identity is central to the temporality of the human condition. For philosophers such as Ricoeur (1991), the temporal human experience is grounded in the fundamental mode of the narrative and hence the indirect discourse of narration mediates the unstable nature of identity through time indicating the tension between ‘stasis’ and ‘change’. McNay (2013) indicates that the aspect of time provides a way of thinking in terms of the durability of certain forms of gender identity. In other words, McNay emphasizes the importance of relying on narratives for durability and continuity due to the flexible nature of identity as contingent upon a particular set of social relations.

The interconnectedness of gender and narrative is also chained to agency as a social construct. McNay (2013) tackled Butler’s (1993) idea of performative agency, which had an enormous impact on feminist work at the time. In her assumption, the production of sex is reproduced in a process of iteration (Butler, 1993). This indeterminate process causes the possibility for agency to emerge. In other words, the performative nature of gender identity is responsible for the emergence of the agent subject as a coherent entity capable of resisting social norms. In terms of discourse, agency acknowledges structures of constraint since “agency begins where sovereignty wanes. The one who acts...acts precisely to the extent that he or she constituted as an actor and, hence, operating within a linguistic field of enabling constraints from the outset” (Butler, 1997, p. 16). In investigating the connection between agency and gender identity through the indirect discourse of narration, this present study acknowledges the temporality of gender identity responsible for social change and transformation. And in what follows, a reflection on research on agency and gender identity in narrative discourse is displayed.

One of the earliest works investigating agency in narratives was Bakhtin’s (1984) examination of discourse in Dostoevsky’s novels. Bakhtin examined the dialogic relationships of speakers to their discourse. In Dostoevsky’s *The Double*, Golyadkin's character has an

insistent desire to assert his own self and to live without the recognition of the other. Bakhtin (1984) delineated that Golyadkin's self-utterances demonstrate an intense sensitivity to others' reactions to his own words and the impact of others' anticipated words on him. In Dostoevsky's approach to highlighting the underlying agency of this character, he resorts to tone, style, as well as the internal semantic structure of Golyadkin's self-utterances. It is important to note that the semantic connotation is among the linguistic tools considered for the analysis of the novels presented in this study.

In *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky, Bakhtin (1984) analyzed a contradictory discourse to *The Double*. Bakhtin indicated that Ippolit's confessions, the main character, denoted his indifference to other's judgments and his own agency "I don't want to go away without leaving some word in response... a free word, not forced out of me, and not to justify myself (Dostoevsky, 2003)" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 241). Bakhtin pointed out that this analysis indicates that "a dialogic approach is possible toward any signifying part of an utterance...if that word is perceived not as the impersonal word of language but as a sign of someone else's semantic position" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 184). That is to say that embodied meanings come into inner contact, what Bakhtin calls 'a semantic bond'. Moreover, Bakhtin presented another dialogic extension of meaning; that is hidden dialogicality in which the words of a second speaker in a dialogue are omitted but the presence is influential. This hidden dialogue is a highly important technique in the analysis of Dostoevsky's novels and is relevant to the investigation of the novels in this current study.

Another linguistic study on agency in literary discourse is Hassan's (2006) work on the stylistic elements of translational literature in the case of Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999). In the translational text of *The Map of Love*, Hassan spoke of, what he called, the "ethical" agency of translators in terms of the 'fluency' and 'transparency' of their translations. Hassan spoke of the translators' challenges in terms of the cultural power differentials responsible for

the reproduction of stereotypical identities. In effect, Hassan pointed out that *The Map of Love* demonstrates translators' dilemma to maintain consistency while leveraging the cultural context and the linguistic mediation tools such as, proverbs and other idiomatic expressions, turn of phrase, and registers. In one of the examples, a character is explaining to her friend how to capitalize on her Arabic vocabulary saying "Take the root q-l-b, qalb... Qalb: the heart... there's a set number of forms - a template almost - that any root can take. So in the case of "qalb" you get "qalab": to overturn, overthrow, turn upside down, make into the opposite (Soueif, 2000)" (Hassan, 2006, P. 758). According to Hassan, this example proves the limits of translation and the existence of what is called "the untranslatable". In another excerpt, Hassan proved that the untranslatable parts are representative of modernist alienation "drumming and clapping and their voices rose so that I thrilled to that ululating joy-cry which I had read about but never heard (Soueif, 1999)" (Hassan, 2006, p. 763). Hassan concluded that the novel demonstrates that, in balancing the cultural and the linguistic aspect of translation, there are no guarantees of ethical agency unless translators are able to provide an honest perception of cultural identities. Hassan's take on using a language to project on perceptions of agency and identity in novels provides another dimension to the approach adopted in this study.

Three years earlier, Eid (2003) investigated the concept of agency in relation to gender in literary discourse. Eid focused on the contemporary written short stories of Egyptian women from the perspective of language duality: "the linguistic choices reflected in the stories and the implications they may have for the stories themselves and for the linguistic context in which the choices are made" (Eid 2003, p. 205). In the context of this study, Eid pointed out that women writers are set apart from other traditional male discourse because of their challenge to all pre-conceived ideologies on Egyptian Colloquial and Standard Arabic, a dichotomy emphasizing the power of code choice over the written word. The study examined linguistic agency in both dialogue and narrative in the written discourses of eight writers;

Radwa Ashour, *Ra 'aytu lnakhl (I Saw the Palm Trees)*, 1989; Salwa Bakr, *'Agiin al-fallaaha (The Monkey Trainer)*, 1992; Neimat El Beheiri, *al- 'Aashiquun (The Lovers)*, 1989; Mona Ragab, *Wujuuhun bila rutuush (Faces Without Retouches)*, 1997; Naglaa Muharram, *Istayqiz! (Wake up!)*, 1997; Etidal Osman, *Younus al-bahr (Jonah of the Sea)*, 1987; Ibtihal Salem, *al-Nawras (The Seagull)*, 1989; Latifa Al-Zayyat, *al-Shaykhuukha wa qisas ukhra (Old Age and Other Stories)*, 1986. In what follows, I review some of the important findings of this study.

Based on an examination of these literary discourses, Eid (2003) proposed a model of linguistic agency which rests upon the assumption that linguistic choices, “not only reflect the context ... but also serve to reproduce or change it” (p. 204). Eid demonstrated that syntactic, morphological, as well as phonological differences are clear evidence of language variety. An example taken from her study of *ʕla daw? ʔal fumu:ʕ (By Candlelight)* by Latifa Al-Zayyat, shows one instance in which the writer uses colloquial syntax in the utterance of a peasant woman indicating that the code choice puts forth a contradiction between the honesty of the village and the authenticity of the city; a vision completed when the protagonist becomes determinant to change her life and never return to Cairo where artificiality dominates everything. In such a model of linguistic agency, Eid demonstrated that “linguistic choices are acts with sociocultural and political implications. Thus, they can reproduce sociolinguistic reality and the institutions that support it, or they can subvert it and thereby change that reality” (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985, p. 181). Eid’s model of linguistic agency rests upon the assumption that language varieties are determinants of reproducing and changing social realities. Hence, her analysis is relevant to the current study in the mediation of language as a means of social transformation.

In another study that examines code choice in novels, Bassiouney (2015) analyzed the discourse in Haqqi’s *Qindi:l Umm Hashim (The Saint’s lamp)*. Through the character of

Fatma, an orphaned naïve girl, who was meant to marry her educated cousin, Ismail, Bassiouney offered another account of agency. In the novel, Fatma is depicted as an agentless character, especially when it comes to her relationship with Ismail, much like a relation between “a master and a slave”. In most dialogic interactions, Ismail addresses Fatma in ECA and her only reply also comes in ECA:

*ʔu:mi: na:mi: ya Fatma.
Lissa badri: ma gali:f nu:m.*

“Get up and go to sleep, Fatimah.”
“It’s still early—I’m not sleepy yet (Haqqi, 1973)” (Bassiouney, 2015, p. 271)

In speaking only in ECA, Bassiouney coins Fatma as a symbol of Egypt. As a girl turning blind and realizing her own limitations, Fatma was able to restore Ismail’s belief system. By marrying her at the end of the novel, Ismail surrenders to what Fatma represents and acknowledges his own Egyptian identity. In choosing ECA as Fatma’s code choice, Haqqi emphasizes Fatma’s power and resilience as well as her naivety and illiteracy which is representative of “the deficiencies of both Egyptians and the associations of ECA, which are not necessarily all positive. Like “Egypt,” she may be authentic, but she is far from ideal” (Bassiouney, 2015, p. 272). In analyzing the dialogic relation between Fatma and Ismail, Bassiouney discusses agency through the author’s perceptions of Egyptian identity at the time. This linguistic analysis is closely tied to the present study which examines agency and the authors’ perceptions of gender identity through the medium of narration.

Given the fact that women’s voice in novels is a primary focus in this study, another investigation of gender in fiction seems relevant. Darraj (2003) examined the hybrid identity of the writer Ahdaf Souief in her literary corpus of short stories in *Aisha* and *Sandpiper* as well as her novels *The Map of Love* and *In the Eye of the Sun*. The examination deals with the notion of hybridity “a strategic reversal of the process of domination through...the production of discriminating identities” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112). In these short stories, Souief explores

the tension between East and West in matters of gender and sexuality. The first short story, *Aisha*, for example, is about a young fifteen-year-old girl who is immersed in the tension between two opposite worlds of England and Egypt. In *Sandpiper*, Souief writes about a very lonely woman feeling estranged in the East rather than the West. In both stories, the writer topples the colonized/colonizer perspectives to Egypt and England. Darraj (2003) indicated that Souief portrays her characters as agents with voice and control demonstrating that “identification as cultural hybrids does allow them to carve out a space...for building a cultural bridge that will portray the historic dynamic of the East and West” (Darraj, 2003, p. 106).

Agency in novels has also been discussed in other languages and different contexts, among them was the Swedish novels. Mäntymäki (2013) investigated social criticism of women murderers from victims to avengers in the narrative of three contemporary Swedish crime novels, Henning Mankell’s *The Fifth Woman*, Håkan Nesser’s *Woman with Birthmark* and Fredrik Ekelund’s *Nina och sundet* (Nina and the Strait). In the novels, traumatized women narrate stories of their experiences by directing them to criticize the support of male violence in political and social institutions. The analysis of parody and irony in discourse proved that they, “are closely connected in that they both are dependent on culturally established categories such as truth/given/generally accepted, surface vs. depth or explicit vs implicit and engage in blurring them” (Mäntymäki, 2013, p. 444). By analyzing female vulnerable discourse of hegemonic masculinity, Mäntymäki demonstrated that the narrative of feminist crime novels is productive of social resistance. In addition, her findings showed that writers’ female agency in Swedish fiction is strongly associated with representations of subversion and hence renew crime genre in which female agency is equivalent to the agency of the detective.

2.7. Educational discourse

From the aforementioned reflection on previous research on agency, we can assume that the construct coincides with various discourse genres. Recently, there has been a growing interest in educational discourse in issues of students' and teachers' agency. Interest in agency research can be attributed to matters of accountability, teachers' empowerment, and social factors mediating students' agent selves. It is, therefore, important to investigate agency for what it represents as "dialogic, emergent, and discursive. It is in dialogue with prevailing institutional regulations. It emerges in interaction with regulation and it is a discursive process" (Benesch, 2018, p. 2). In what follows, a detailed account of some of the studies on agency and educational discourse is presented.

In language teaching, research attributed agency to ideologies of resistance and language reform. Benesch (2018) explored emotion labor and feeling rules as indicators of teachers' agency in the decision-making process. In this discursive examination, emotions are utilized as discursively-constructed but socially-mediated, i.e. members of discourse communities are taught which emotions are appropriate in particular social situations (Benesch, 2018). To put this theoretical assumption in context, Benesch interviewed English language teachers to discuss matters of institutional power, specifically implicit rules of plagiarism policy. Respondents showed resistance to the university's plagiarism policy through, 1) 'hypervigilance, 2) 'indignation', 3) and retribution'. The implication of this study draws the attention of institutions to how teachers are affectively positioned in terms of imposed rules and their choices of resisting or obeying them. To conclude, in educational discourse, the concept of institutional resistance is still accountable for many of teachers' practices.

Another study that examines the interplay of gender, race, and culture in the formation of teachers' agency is Vitanova's (2018) longitudinal project on ESL/EFL teachers in training. Vitanova relied on multimedia narratives including, written texts, images, and interviews in

order to trace the importance of social variables such as gender and race in the formulation of their agentive selves. The primary source of data was three second-language teachers whose narratives were analyzed to detect their emergent agency and to examine their social identities. Findings showed that their discursive practices of agency were marked for acts of resistance and demonstrations of awareness of their social responsibility as agent subjects. Based on Bakhtin's views on social responsibility and relational selves, research implications suggest that narratives provide teachers with opportunities for resistance and transformative acts. Hence, the study of the impact of social factors on teachers' narratives suggests, not only acts of resistance, but an invitation to transform their social reality, a dimension of agency that is relevant to this study.

The last study in this genre investigated second language writing (SLW) teachers' agency and its connection to their expertise. Christiansen (2018) investigated the narratives of three graduate teaching assistants who were also assigned to teach writing courses in English as a Second Language (ESL) for markers of teacher agency. The narratives were extracted from their participation in Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to examine what constitutes the development of their expertise as Second Language Writing teachers. Through this examination, Christiansen identified elements of teacher agency in connection with their adaptive expertise in terms of their capacity to act, to be goal-oriented, self-regulated, and strategic. Therefore, this study provides an in-depth insight into the enhancement of teacher agency, especially in relation to adaptive expertise. In essence, this section concludes with a futuristic perspective for the enhancement of teacher agency and hence another unconventional dimension of agency is presented.

2.8. Summary of Chapter

In short, the literature review has shown various contexts in which gender and agency were examined. From discourses of religion and piety to literary and educational discourse, previous research dealt with the construct as discursively constructed and culturally-mediated

with implications that emphasize the power of words to the structure, durability, and transformation of social norms and values.

Furthermore, past research tackled issues of gender and agency in terms of stigmatized fixed concepts that were mostly relevant to resistance to male dominance and subversion of the status quo. We have also seen that concepts of gender agency have been influenced by feminist theorists and scholars such as Judith Butler (1993 and 1997), whose theory on the performativity of gender has revolutionized gender studies for decades. Butler's take on 'the iterability of performativity' demonstrated how social norms are structured and perpetuated through time. The literature has shown studies on this intricate relationship in various context, i.e. Egypt, Nepal, and Namibia, to display markers of agency in language which highlight culturally-mediated gender practices.

In the fourth section of this chapter, issues of agency and gender have been examined in the world of narration and literary discourse. Despite the limited number of research on this area, the presented literature investigated agency in the eyes of long and short story writers, female authors of Swedish novels, translators of Anglophone writers, i.e. Ahdaf Soueif, and the effect of hybridity on the agency of female characters. Collectively, the analysis has proven that agency is a language choice predetermined by complex social, and at times political, constraints such as in the case of Ahdaf Soueif's novels.

Finally, the literature reviewed teachers' agency in educational discourse and discussed various aspects evident in teachers' narration. The presented studies showed that agency was at times relevant to resistance to implicit rules and policies and other times to transformative acts, and enhancement of their adaptive expertise.

The following should present the contribution of the current study to research as well as a rationale for the adoption of such approach.

2.9. Research Gap

This study focuses on an important element that is missing from the terrain on language, gender, and agency studies, which is the creative aspect of agency in the world of story-telling. Duranti (2004) states that “this is a dimension ...which both affirms the speaker qua speaker and reveals human qualities and emotions that can be equally or more powerful than the propositional content” (p. 459). By creativity, there is a proposed dimension to action that allows for autonomous agency, i.e. the possibility to act in an unexpected fashion instituting new social values to emerge and reproduce.

Important to note that the study does not only confine itself to the linguistic examination of literary discourse, i.e. syntactic and lexical structures, but also recognizes what Bakhtin calls the ‘metalinguistics’ in which the ‘dialogic speech’ manifests cultural modes of behavior and social representations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study primarily focuses on the linguistic and discursive analysis of four gender-related novels across different eras in Egyptian literary history. Towards such analysis, the methodology duly examines the strategies and structures produced by the protagonists to express their agent selves. Such examination would render a much deeper interpretation into the understanding of further character dimensions in order to establish a connection between texts and a larger social phenomenon, in this case, agency. To reach such goals, I present a detailed account of research design, data, strategies, sample selection criteria, and data analysis tools.

3.2. Research Data

For the purpose of this study, I focused on a total of four Egyptian novels published between 1956 and 2017. The list consists of the following: *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) by Naguib Mahfouz, *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door) by Latifa Al-Zayyat, *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man) by Noor Abdul Majeed, and *ʔaḡaf* (Passion) by Rasha Adli. Each novel probes into women's inner conflict between their own perceptions of their power as opposed to others. Each character has its own struggles when it comes to negotiating their power amidst social complexities, patriarchal authority, and male dominance. By examining their linguistic and discursive practices, I attempt to offer a creative dimension of agency emerging from such complexities and social challenges, which may reinforce or propel social change.

Published in 1957, *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) is the first installment of Mahfouz's famous trilogy. The novel takes place between 1917 and 1919 marking the

cultural and political transformation Egypt experienced through the family of Al-Sayyid Aḥmad Abd Al-Jawad. Depicted as the tyrannical husband and father, Amina is pictured as the obedient unquestioning wife who pretends to be totally oblivious of her husband's philandering activities. The novel, not only lends itself to the complex political history of Egypt at the time but also to the tumultuous status of women. For this study, Amina's character is significant as a living portrayal of intense oppression and male dominance underpinned during this era. Mahfouz's portrayal of Amina as a submissive wife is accentuated through the dialogic structure of the narrative which shows, not only a complete denial of agency but also an inner struggle for self-realization.

The second novel examined in this study is Al-Zayyat's highly acclaimed novel *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door). Published in 1960, the novel explores a middle-class Egyptian girl before the 1952 Egyptian revolution amidst the growing nationalist movement. Layla, the protagonist, is in search for herself as a young girl coming of age in an important turning point in Egypt's history, both politically and culturally. The novel does not only speak to the political turbulence at the time but also speaks to the social status of women whose conflicting power sways between patriarchal authority and the pressure to comply with social norms. In the search of her identity, Layla is torn between surrendering herself to true love and forcing herself to follow what society deems fit for a girl her age. Her linguistic repertoire shows how she negotiates her power every time she is faced with a challenge that places her identity into question. Therefore, Layla's character is deemed as a perfect fit for the investigation of women's agency in another important era in Egypt's history.

The third novel examined in this study is Noor Abdul Majeed's *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), which was published in 2011. This novel depicts another female struggle in Egypt's modern time. The protagonist, Amina, who ironically has the same name as the main character in *Bayna ʔal-qasrayn* (Palace Walk) is a happily married woman to a legal

prosecutor, Selim, with two daughters. Faced with a demon from her father's past affair, Amina receives another blow from her husband who remarries upon his mother's urging to have a son. Consequently, she seeks revenge by filing a lawsuit demanding divorce based on the fact that the family wants a male child although it is the man's chromosomes that determine the gender of the child. In this tug of war, Amina's power as a modern woman is of interest to this study due to her constant negotiation of agency and her persistent attempts to take matters into her own hands. Amina's dialogic understanding forces a reconceptualization of her own power emerging from facing complexity and difference.

Finally, the last of this research data is taken from Rasha Adli's recent novel, *ḡaḡaf* (Passion), published in 2017. The novel takes the reader between two very different times, the Mamluk and the modern time. The story has two different characters, Zaynab, the portrait lady from 1890s, and Yasmeen, a researcher who lives a turbulent love story with a Sufi architect. Adli portrays the struggles of both characters who find themselves conflicting over their desires and obligations. The novel primarily depicts the social conflicts through Zaynab's character which lends itself to the restrictions and impediments of her society. Falling in love with the French portrait artist while having an affair with Napoleon Bonaparte, Zaynab finds herself fighting back the rumors and hearsay of everyone when she chooses a different path than other women of her time. Adli draws this character as a social agent who is in constant negotiation of her own power in search for her true identity. This novel displays the inherent instability of gender norms and individuals' capabilities to respond to differences in a more creative fashion.

The following table illustrates research data and relevant time frames:

Novel	Author	Publishing Date	Protagonist
<i>Bayna ḡal-qaṣrayn</i> (Palace Walk)	Naguib Mahfouz	1957	Amina

Novel	Author	Publishing Date	Protagonist
<i>ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh</i> (The Open Door)	Latifa Al-Zayyat	1960	Layla
<i>ʔu:ri:du rajulan</i> (I Need a Man)	Noor Abdul Majeed	2011	Amina
<i>ʔaḡaf</i> (Passion)	Rasha Adli	2017	Zaynab

It is worth mentioning that in order to reach the final selection of the data, around thirty novels were read for sampling and application. Out of the many Arabic novels written in the twenty and the twenty-first centuries, these novels were particularly selected due to a number of reasons. First, the spread over time in which the novels were written and their diversified content. Secondly, each novel forces a particular image of women in terms of their depiction as social agents. In each and every character, there is a struggle over power. If we consider the iconic character of Amina in *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), she is portrayed as an obedient wife in complete deprivation of her agency but still manages in few incidents to seize the opportunity to act on her own. For Layla in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door), her actions demonstrate an inner conflict between what society mandates and her aspirations as a woman at this time and age. Eventually, she fights back and reaches a self-realization moment by which she is able to determine her own identity. In *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), the protagonist, again Amina, is an established well-rounded woman of modern time who is confronted with a situation that leaves her powerless. She, then, decides to set herself apart and devise a new form of power different from what is relevant and acceptable in her society. In *ʔaḡaf* (Passion), the manifestations of women as social agents, through the character of Zaynab, depict a new form of resistance to social norms that articulate new facets of agency symbolic of her gender identity. That with the number of novels are considered sufficient to reach a major trend across the sampled data extracted from the texts.

3.3. Research Questions

To reiterate, the following are the research questions:

1. What are the creative dimensions of agency in performing gender identity in the discourse of *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), and *ʔaḡaḡ* (Passion)?
 - a) How do grammatical structures represent manifestations of gender in relation to agency?
 - b) How does the investigation of the semantic strategies, i.e. subject semantic roles, verb type, and sentence moods, reflect the role of gender in relation to agency?
 - c) What are the discursive strategies employed by the authors for the depiction of the protagonists as social agents?

3.4. Sampling Criteria

The purpose of examining the discourses in all four novels is to explore various creative dimensions of agency through the grammatical and semantic constructions as well as the discursive features. Therefore, a purposeful sample was extracted from the texts. The data were examined and classified based on the contextualization of utterances since “language use may not always evoke the same social meanings in different contexts. Utterances acquire their meanings contextually and therefore should be interpreted within the context in which they occur” (Albirini, 2016, p. 52). Towards that end, the context was analyzed within three different levels; 1) setting, which indicates the spatial and social frame in which encounters take place, 2) language which means that talk not only invokes language, but also provides context for other talk, and finally 3) extrasituational context which goes beyond the immediate setting in which the talk takes place to other dimensions of background knowledge

(Ochs, 1979). The rationale behind this distribution is to highlight the diverse representation of agency depending on language variation within different interactional situations.

3.5. Procedures for Data Collection

Since the intended goal of this study is to operationalize the concept of agency in these novels, the procedures of data collection followed a mediated discourse analysis approach (MDA). Scollon and de Saint-Georges (2013) define mediated-discourse analysis as “linkages between discourse and action and how these play out in complex social situations” (p. 66). This definition lends itself to the idea of how agents’ concrete actions are mediated in actual social situations while examining their relevance. “In MDA, researchers take the primary entity to be the *social action*, taken by a social actor through the use of some mediational means” (Scollon and de Saint-Georges, 2013, p. 70). A mediated-discourse analysis of agency is an integrated approach that goes beyond the individual to investigate the social practices and the mediational means involved in a constructed social action (Jones and Norris, 2005). For this current study, the language was adopted as a mediational tool, which is constantly and purposefully appropriated by actors. Towards that end, linguistic and metalinguistic investigations would be useful in establishing the connection between the local textual structures to the macro-level context in the representations of agency.

The initial steps to the textual examination started with reading all four novels after which several contextual segments were marked based on Ochs’ (1979) levels of context. This contextual dissection allows for distinct characteristics of gender identity to resurface as protagonists negotiate and appropriate their agency. The investigation as distributed among actors, discourses, and mediational means aims at highlighting that “the agentic orientations of actors (along with their capacity for inventive or deliberative response) may vary in dialogue with the different situational contexts to which (and by means of which) they respond” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 1004). Thus, through analyzing the protagonists’

linguistic choices in social action and their implications on themselves as agentive actors, their identities are reconfigured giving rise to the emergence of their own set of norms.

In order to accommodate the research requirements, I followed a purposeful intensity sampling method for data collection from each novel. This technique was pursued to serve the research purposes and dilute the focus to representative data of the phenomenon under investigation; in this case agency. Representative narratives from each novel were selected based on the sampling criteria. Contexts were, then, distributed into textual segments, which Tesch (1990) defines as single meaningful ideas or pieces of information. Data were analyzed in terms of the grammatical and semantic manifestations of agency, i.e. subject category, sentence moods, semantic roles, and the semantic connotations of verbs and their implications. In addition to the linguistic analysis, the analyst investigated the actors' discursive strategies, i.e. dialogicality, parallelism, foregrounding and backgrounding, to demonstrate how each character negotiates and appropriates their power in discourse. The previously mentioned strategies demonstrate actors' perceptions of their agentive selves and the functionality of language in negotiating and "creating" their own set of social values despite cultural impediments.

For purposes of this study, both Arabic and available translated versions of the novels were used. For *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), the analyst utilized William M. Hutchins and Olive E. Kenny's translated version. As for *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), data from Marilyn Booth's (2002) translated copy were quoted. The other two novels were not translated and therefore, the analyst depended on their understanding for translating the excerpts. Samples from all four novels were first transcribed according to the Arabic International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)¹, following suit of other scholars and researchers, and translated into English after which the aforementioned linguistic and discursive analyses were

¹ Transcription guide is in Appendix I.

conducted. To conclude, the study followed a deductive approach to data analysis and interpretation.

3.6. Data Analysis Strategies

To relate the local context of discourse to the phenomenon under study, grammatical structures, semantic strategies, and discursive features were the mediational means for interpreting the data. Ahearn (2001) indicates that “any discussion of agency and language must consider how grammatical categories in different languages distinguish among types of subjects” (p. 120). For the grammatical investigation, I adopted Dixon’s (1994) theory that all languages have common features in relation to agency; i.e. all languages have *S* (subject), *A* (agent), and *O* (object). *S* refers to the subject of an intransitive verb, *A* denotes the agent of a transitive verb, and *O* for the object of a transitive verb. For Dixon (1994), the “subject is a universal category, having a vital role in the grammar of every language” (p. 112). The *S*, *A*, and *O* distinction indicates how actors are positioned and projects how agency is attributed, exercised, denied, or devised. In addition, the category of voice, i.e. (active or passive), is investigated. The following is an example of the passive voice from *ḡaḡaf* (Passion):

و منذ متى لم نحكم بالصوت و اللجام؟! على الاقل هناك ثمار للخوف من العقاب الان.
Wa munḡu mata: lam nuḡkamu² bil ṣawti wal liga:m? Ṣala: ḡalḡqali huna:ka Θima:r lil xawfi min ḡal ḡiqa:b ḡal ḡa:n. (Adli, 2017, p. 49)
And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny? At least we can see an outcome of fearing punishment.

To address the second research question, this study followed Duranti’s (1994) division of semantic roles. That is to say, the subject of the sentence may assume several roles:

“Agent	<i>Pabi</i> read the book.
Actor	<i>Shiva</i> danced.

² Passive Voice.

Perceiver **Tika** heard the news.

Instrument **The stone** broke the window.

Patient/Undergoer **The old woman** died” (Duranti, 1994, pp. 122–123)

These roles would be useful in the interpretation of gender identity perceptions, i.e. whether the protagonist takes up the role of an instrument, a patient, an agent...etc. depends on the characters’ semantic choice. In addition, texts were also analyzed in terms of the connotation of the verbs and their core meanings (stative or action verbs). In essence, verbs bear more than just the surface structure meaning of the sentence and imply the contextual positioning and framing of the protagonists. Examples of action verbs are:

رايحة افتش على محمود.

Ra:yḥa³ ʔafatiḥ⁴ ʕala Maḥmu:d. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 3)

I am going to look for Mahmoud. (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 3)

Another example of stative verbs was also deployed in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man):

من قال انها لم تحلم بذكر؟

Man qa:l ʔa:naha lam taḥlum⁵ biḍakar? (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 286).

Who said she never wished for a boy?

Finally, the semantic strategies include sentence moods, i.e. (imperative, declarative, subjunctive...etc.). The following example of both imperative and declarative moods is from *ʕaḡaf* (Passion):

أرجوك لا تتركني و تذهب فيدونك لا حياة لي.

ʔarju:k la tatrukani⁶: wa tadḡab.ʔa bidu:nak la ḡayat li⁷: (Adli, 2017, p. 316)

Please, don't leave me. I have no life without you.

Eventually, the agentive persona of the protagonists is foregrounded by relying on the structural elements of propositions in the selected purposeful samples. In other words, the

³ Action verb.

⁴ Action verb.

⁵ Stative verb

⁶ Imperative mood.

⁷ Declarative mood.

lexical and structural interactions denote key elements to the micro and macro connections of agency (Ahearn, 2001). The linguistic examination, here, was not only intended for the interpretation of actors' identities, but also for highlighting how they creatively conform, contest, and appropriate their linguistic repertoire to the contexts of interaction. To conclude, this examination primarily explores how language operates creatively for new forms of values to be fashioned and reproduced.

This study is also interested in examining the discursive practices of the main characters in order to trace the development of their agency in social situations throughout the designated storylines. Bakhtin (1984) highlighted the importance of examining discourse in the investigation of agency and subject indicating that speakers "must clothe themselves in discourse, become utterances, and become the positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relationships might arise among them" (p. 183). Primarily, the discursive examination included three strategies, 1) dialogicality, 2) parallelism, 3) foregrounding and backgrounding. As for dialogicality, Du Bois (2007) explains that this discourse tool ties the words previously spoken to the current utterances across "the horizons of language". Meanwhile, Johnstone (2008) defines parallelism as the predictable conscious or unconscious cognitive strategy which occurs when two words or phrases are placed within the same or similar grammatical context leading to establishing the relationship between the two. The final strategy is foregrounding which refers to "relative prominence in discourse...the analogy is of a figure seen against a background (and the rest of the text is often referred to as backgrounding)" (Crystal, 2008, p. 194). In essence, agency is "an act with consequences, an extended doing, a performance with effects" (Butler, 1997, p. 7). Hence, the display of these discursive tools along with the linguistic ones aims at looking at the texts from all angles to eventually prove the given hypothesis.

3.7. Data Analysis

To answer the research sub-questions, data were collected and categorized under three main broad categories: grammatical, lexical groups, and discursive. The analysis primarily intended to explore linguistic patterns within a contextual frame in order to devise a schema by which actors creatively fashion their agentive identities. For that purpose, textual segments from the novels were dissected and coded separately. For grammatical forms and lexical choices, the extracted narratives were decontextualized and regrouped for examination. Table 1 is a sample narrative segment from *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door):

Table 1

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
BM 1	<i>ʔana ʔitʔatalt xalaṣ “I’ve been killed, that’s it, and it’s all over”</i>	<i>ʔana/I</i>	Object	<i>O</i>	Object of a transitive verb	Passive
	<i>Yarit ʔaʔdar ʔaru:ḥ maṣa:k! “I wish I could go with you”</i>	pro- dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Subject	<i>S</i>	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active

Table 1 - Sample of the Grammatical Analysis from ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ (The Open Door)

In each narrative, the frequency counts of each table items, i.e. grammatical agents, codes, and voice were used as an index to the conceptual agency of the main characters. The analysis also traced the variation of linguistic tools in all selected narratives in order to detect the evolvement and the creative process by which the text implied the rise of a newly-fashioned set of norms and values.

The semantic strategies⁸ were also coded and regrouped in each narrative to highlight how agency was framed within each segment. With the frequency count, the subjects’ action patterns in terms of conforming to or defying the current social norms become more evident. Relevant to what Joas (1996) has emphasized that actors’ role becomes more prominent when

⁸ Appendix II contains a guideline for semantic role coding

contriving a completely new action trend that does not necessarily comply with the conventional values of his/her society. Table 2 shows the connotations of the semantic roles in the same narrative sample examined from *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door):

Table 2:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence moods
BM 1	<i>ʔana ʔitʔatalʔ xalaʃ</i> “I’ve been killed, that’s it, and it’s all over”	<i>ʔana /I</i>	Patient/unde -rgoer	5	The subject here is acted upon and a receiver of others’ doings	Action	Indicative
	<i>Yarit ʔaʔdar ʔaru:h</i> <i>maʃa:k!</i> “I wish I could go with you”	Pro- dropped “ʔana /I”	Actor	2	The subject here is a mere performer of the action	Action	Subjunctive

Table 2 - Sample from the Semantic Strategies in ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh (The Open Door)

The above-mentioned schematic analysis has been conducted in the representative narratives and all linguistic features were cited in all chosen segments. Through the examination of the denotational roles of the concept of agency, actors’ path of action would be evident. Therefore, the interplay of the grammatical agents, semantic roles, and lexical connotations in this study provided a deeper insight into how actors use their linguistic resources to creatively devise their actions. McNay (2013) suggests that with regards to issues of gender, examining agency shows “how women acted autonomously in the past despite restricting social sanctions and also how they may act now in the context of processes of gender restructuring” (p. 5).

With regards to the third research sub-question, the text examination, in terms of discourse tools, provided another analytic dimension to the interpretation of the narratives. To apply the aforementioned discourse tools on the same segment from *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door):

أنا اتقتلت خلاص.

ʔana ʔitʔatalʔ xalaʃ. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 49)

I’ve been killed, that’s it, and it’s all over. (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 55)

This statement employs the discursive feature of foregrounding. In this segment, Layla, the protagonist, is giving an intensifying feeling of suffering under the oppressive authority of her father by indicating that her life is completely ruined after she was reprimanded by her father for going on a protest with her colleagues.

As a final step in the analysis, an expository comparison between all the samples was conducted. The comparability was based on both linguistic and conceptual frameworks; i.e. how actions were devised through language and the kinds of actions established to deny, attribute, or assume agency.

Figure 1 summarizes the schematic outline for the process of data analysis:

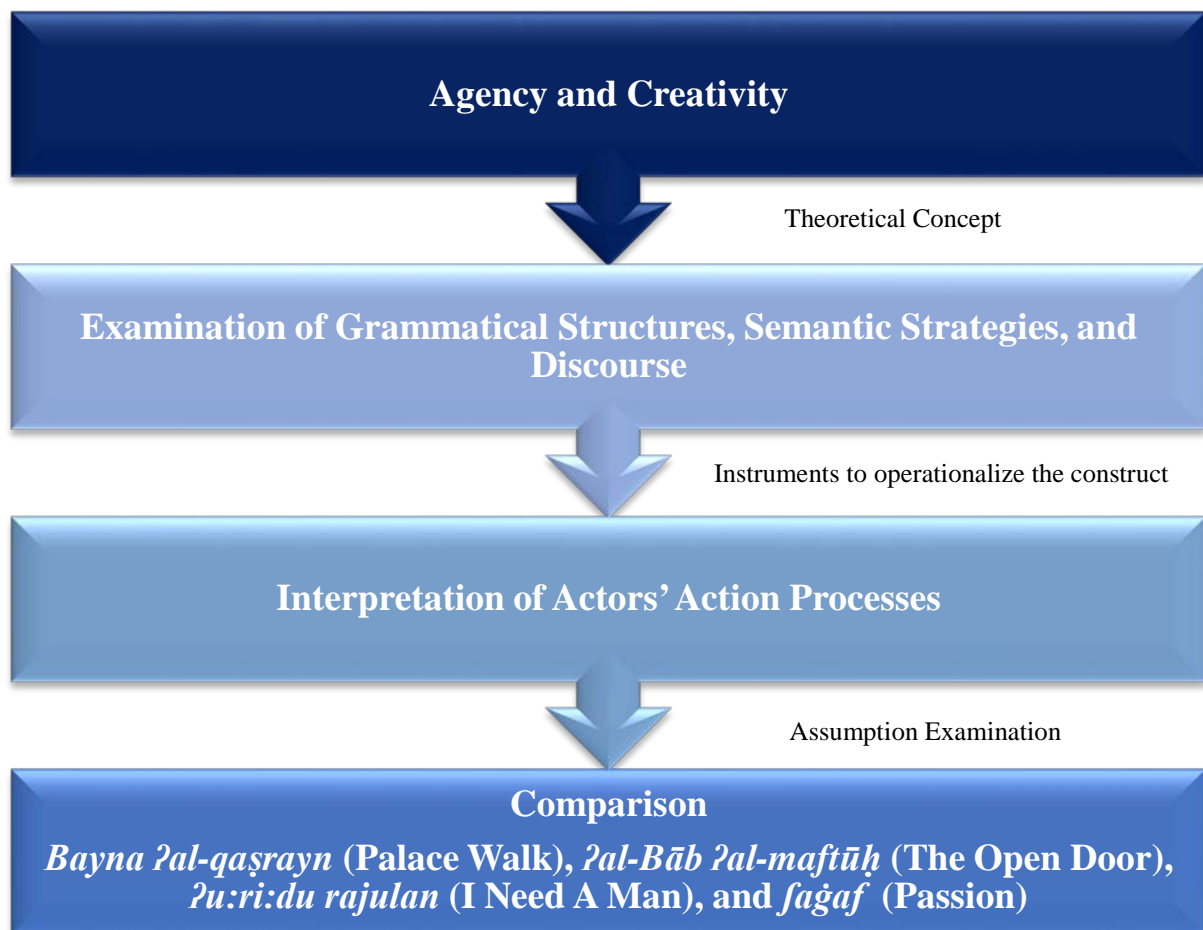


Figure 1 - Steps for the Process of Data Analysis

3.8. Credibility of Study

This study has been designed within a framework addressed by McNay's (1999) research on "Subject, Psyche, and Agency: The Work of Judith Butler". In his study, the connection between agency and creativity has been brought to the forefront "the creativity of an action is a recurrent but somewhat submerged theme in the work of continental social theorist and philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur, Cornelius Castoridas, Michel de Certeua, and Alain Toraine" (McNay, 1999, p. 187). To operationalize the conceptual construct, Dixon's (1994) classification of grammatical agents was followed as well as Duranti's (1994) examination of the semantic roles of the subjects.

There were no major issues regarding the study and no additional data collection instruments were needed. Moreover, the material was also at hand due to the availability of the novels. It is also worth mentioning that there were no special permissions to attain the material required for the study. As a contingency plan, the texts were annotated and documented electronically for reference and validation. Coding was based on the classification of each lexical and grammatical subcategory and tabulated accordingly. For the sake of promptness and efficiency, a time frame of about three months was allocated for the examination and validation of the findings.

Past research has tackled the interrelationship between language, agency, and gender identity, however, the examination of novels has been somewhat scarce. Hence, the purpose of this study is to shed light on this phenomenon by investigating the linguistic devices used by the authors to represent what they perceived as a social reality of life in relation to agency. In so doing, agentive identities are formed and reproduced through "the linguistic resources individuals draw on to present themselves as gendered beings in relation to other aspects of the self within the constraints of their communities, more or less conforming to or resisting these constraints" (Kendall and Tannen, 2001, p. 639).

3.9. Summary of Chapter

This chapter presented a detailed account of the methodology followed for this study in terms of design, data, sampling criteria, procedures of data collection, and data analysis strategies. The chapter has also displayed how the linguistic and discursive devices were utilized for the interpretation of the characters' action as a means through which the construct of agency is operationalized. Considering the aforementioned, the chapter has provided a road map through which an understanding of agency in the context of a constructed reality is provided.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This study adopted a linguistic and discursive analysis approach to the investigation of the social construct of agency in four Egyptian novels with a focus on their female protagonists. The novels are *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), and *ʔaḡaf* (Passion). By definition, “for an individual to possess agency is for her to possess internal powers and capacities, which, through their exercise, make her an active entity constantly intervening in the course of events ongoing around her” (Barnes, 2000, p. 25). Thus, the analysis tackles the protagonists’ agency for the purpose of identifying their gender identity as representative of a constructed reality of Egyptian women struggling to find their place amidst societal and patriarchal impositions. This study examines such character conflict to pinpoint the creative dimensions of agency by which the characters are able to devise their own new values and norms. Towards that end, this chapter discusses some of the major elements identified in the analysis.

For this study, a mediated discourse analysis approach was utilized to add a social dimension to the linguistic analysis of the data. Important to note that the cultural and social perspectives were based on the analyst’s knowledge of the context in which the protagonists lived at the time. Aiming at providing a comprehensive approach to the analysis of the data, the analyst investigated the grammatical and semantic manifestations to identify the subject’s role in social action. In addition, the discursive strategies such as dialogicality, parallelism, foregrounding and backgrounding were incorporated to support the theoretical framework of the study.

In this chapter, the analysis is arranged according to the research sub-questions followed by an overall comparison of the data to answer the main research question. For each

section, the novels are analyzed based on the chronological order of their publication with consideration to the historical aspect and character dimension of the novels *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) and *ʔaḡaf* (Passion). The sample discussed in the analysis section is representative of the evolvement of the characters' agentive quality as presented in contextual situation. In addition, the data were coded⁹ to avoid unnecessary repetition and facilitate the trend analysis process.

4.2 Analysis of Grammatical Structures

The structures of language are strongly connected to the creative process by which language is formed (Ricoeur, 1991). As Ballantyne (2007) explains "because speaking is always an actualization of language that depends upon, and reflects, the agency of a speaker...it is neither statements nor utterances that refer, but the 'I'" (p. 136). Stemming from the significance of the 'I', the construction of the characters' identity required a thorough examination of how subjects/actors are represented in the text. That with the investigation of transitive verbs "which describe an action that not only impinges on the patient but necessarily creates a change in it" (Lakoff, 1977, p. 244) should confirm specific actions and behaviors evident of the exercise, denial, or absence of agency in social context.

4.2.1 *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk)

4.2.1.1 Subject Positioning

"It is generally accepted that the characterization of an action or event as involving more or less transitivity is partly a choice that speakers make" (Duranti and Ochs, 1990, p. 12). Therefore, in order to discover such elements, the below analysis follows Dixon's (1994) categorization of subject types. In the data analysis, the subject positions are classified as *S* (subject of an intransitive verb), *A* (agent of a transitive verb), and *O* (object of a transitive

⁹ Data coding is provided in Appendix II.

verb). By investigating the subject positioning, the analyst was able to demonstrate how agency is reflected, reinforced, and in some ways reconfigured in such a narrative context.

In the novel *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), Amina's character is iconic in its embodiment of the prevalence of male dominance and women's absence of agency at the time. In the data shown below, Amina's subject classification can be seen from three different perspectives, one as an oppressed wife, the second as a mother, and the third would be her self-image. In each context, her agency takes a different dimension that indicates the interchangeability and exchange of power depending on the context and the interlocutor. In the following examples, Amina's subject type is classified as an agent:

Example (1)

ولكن أما مثلك خليفة بأن تفسد أبنائها.

Wa la:kin ʔumman miθluki xali:qa biʔan tufside ʔabna:ʔaha: (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 150)

Agent

“But a mother like you could ruin her children”. (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 128)

لكنه رجائي بحسن نية فرأيت أن أعرض الأمر عليك.

Lakinahu ragani: biḥusn niya faraʔaytu ʔan ʔaʕridu ʔal ʔamra ʕalayka. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 150)

Agent

“All he did was ask. It was just a question, sir, with the decision entirely up to you”. (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 128)

ألقي نظرة على الدنيا.

ʔilqi: naʔra ʕala ʔal dunya. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 193)

Agent

“Have a look at the world”. (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 166)

In the first two propositions, Amina is informing her disapproving husband that her son Fahmy wants to betroth their neighbor, Mariam. While her husband marks his authorial presence in the conversation, Amina is negotiating her role as a mother to avoid his anger and disapproval. The proposition, “*tufside ʔabna:ʔaha:/ruin her children*”, indicates the pre-conceived notions of society on motherhood in terms of blaming them for their children's failures and disappointments. In such contexts, women are assigned agency. Evidently, the

subject position in these utterances indicates that Amina is placed as an agent, i.e. subject of a transitive verb, only as a symbol of failure to perform the job she was born to do.

The third proposition, however, is relevant to her role as an oppressed wife. Amina's children encourage her to see the world, only when her husband is away. In their attempt to convince her, they empower her to act on her own desires. The subject, here, is pro-dropped "*?anti/you*", which occurs with the transitive verb "*yulqi:/take a look*" assigning her the role of an agent. By performing such actions, the agent's actions, i.e. Amina, have consequences which would not only affect herself, but also her children and hence her role matches Duranti's (2004) definition of agency.

In other contexts, Amina's self-image demonstrates that she perceives herself as an obedient wife who is only responsible for housework and other domestic duties. However, when it comes to issues related to her role as a woman, she is only a mere performer. The extracts below are representative of Amina's placement in the subject position:

Example (2)

أخطأت خطأ كبيراً يا سيدي.

?axta?tu xata?an kabi:ran ya si:di. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 215)

Subject

"I have committed a grave error, sir". (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 182)

لست طفلة يا فهمي، وما كان ينبغي لي أن أفعل.

Lastu ?ifla-a ya Fahmi:.. Wa ma: ka:n yanbagi: li: ?an ?affal. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 245)

Subject

"I'm not a child, Fahmy and I shouldn't have done it..." (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 209)

The context of these utterances refers to Amina's leaving the house without her husband's permission. The subject, pro-dropped "*?ana/I*", is associated with the intransitive verbs "*yuxti?/commit an error*", and "*yaffalu/do*", denoting her absence of agency since she is not allowed to perform normal life activities in which she would be able to see the world.

Finally, Amina's agency has also been associated with the image of an oppressed wife. Her subject positioning as an object and a recipient/patient upon which the action is

inflicted only occurs in the presence of her overpowering husband. The samples below confirm such a proposition:

Example (3)

كان يضمر لي الغضب و يؤجله ريثما أبرأ، ثم قال لي غادري بيتي بلا توان.
Ka:n yuḍmir liya ḡal ḡadab wa yuḡagilahu rayṮuma: ḡabraḡa, Ṯumma qa:l liya
Object

ḡadiri: bayti: bila: tawanin. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 231)

“He was angry with me and postponed doing something about it till I recovered. Then he told me, ‘leave my house immediately’” (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 197-198)

In this segment, the grammatical constructions, represent two different positions of the subject. In “*yuḍmir liya ḡal ḡadab/He was angry with me*”, the verb contains two arguments, one of which Amina “*liya/me*” stands as an indirect object. This grammatical construction denotes that Amina is the experiencer in this position while the husband is the agent and the controlling entity.

4.2.1.2 The Category of Voice

Henley, Miller, and Beazley (1995) state that “how people interpret a message may depend, in part, on the verb voice used to phrase that message” (p.60). In essence, the extracted representative sample shows that all propositions were presented in the active voice, which establishes the presence of the agent in all sentences. In active sentences, here, the subject, mostly Amina, is expected to act out all the parts. As an oppressed wife, the subject is present to confess her mistakes and admit to spoiling her children by opening up the discussion on her son’s proposal to their young neighbor.

Meanwhile, when Amina acts the role of the object, the agent is still present in the active voice. Important to note that in the above example, the husband has taken the role of an agent, i.e. the subject occurs with the transitive verbs “*yuḍmir/He was angry*”, for emphasis and focus on the doer of the action. Therefore, it can be concluded that the absence of the passive voice strategically establishes the dominant entity in all contexts as to imply

several meanings, i.e. Amina's agent role as a mother, her husband's tyrannical stance, and women's compliance to male authority at the time.

4.2.1.3 Analysis of Grammatical Structures (Representative Sample)

The aforementioned examples are part of a larger purposeful sample extracted from the novel. Table 3 shows a summary of the grammatical structures selected based on Ochs' (1979) classification of context:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
BQ 1	<i>Saʔatruck laki: ʔamr ʔal tarbiya "I'll leave the child rearing to you"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
BQ 2	<i>saʔqu:l laka raʔyi: biṣaraḥa.. ʔina yawman ʔamḍi: fi:hi liʔaxtub "I'll give you my frank opinion...The day I go to arrange an engagement for you"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>Wa man ǧayri: yufatiḥu?...saʔuḥdiṮahu "Who should bring it up but me?...I'll talk to him, and it will be successful"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
BQ 3	<i>biʔan tuḥsida ʔabna:ʔaha "But a mother like you could ruin her children"</i>	pro-dropped "hiya/she"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>ʔaʔridu ʔal ʔamru ʔalayka "It was just a question, sir, with the decision entirely up to you."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
BQ 4	<i>ʔilqi: naʔra ʔala ʔala dunya "Have a look at the world"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔanti/you"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
BQ 5	<i>ʔaxtaʔtu xataʔan kabi:ran "I have committed a grave error"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
BQ 6	<i>yudmir liya ʔal ǧadab "He was angry with me and postponed doing something about it ..."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Active

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
BQ 7	<i>Ma:ka:n yanbaḡi: li: ʔan ʔafʃal. "I shouldn't have done it"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active

Table 3 - Analysis of the Grammatical Structures in Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn (Palace Walk)

The table shows that Amina is mostly an agent in matters of her children's upbringing. In Fahmy's example, the son depends on his mother to convince his father to agree on his marriage. In such contexts, Amina assumes the agent role. On the other hand, Al-Sayyid Ahmad assigns his wife the role of the agent only as a bad example of a mother who spoils her children. Other grammatical roles are related to Amina's position as an oppressed wife. As a subject, Amina commits a grave error by allowing herself an action that angers her husband. Meanwhile, as an object, Amina is depicted as a subordinate entity complaining of her husband's punishment, mostly equivalent to a child fearing his father's punishment.

4.2.1.4 Grammatical Structures (Frequency Count)

Table 4 illustrates the frequency count of the grammatical strategies as presented in the representative sample indicating Amina's agency throughout the extracted data:

Grammatical Agents						Voice	
Subject (S)	Percentage	Agent (A)	Percentage	Object (O)	Percentage	Active	Passive
2	22%	6	66%	1	11%	9	0

Table 4 - Grammatical Structures Frequency Counts in Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn (Palace Walk)

The frequency count of the grammatical categories indicates that 66% of Amina's positioning is the agent, while the subject and object category 22% and 11% respectively. In addition, no instances of the passive voice have been shown in the representative sample. All contextual segments are in the active voice.

4.2.2 *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (Open Door)

4.2.2.1 Subject Positioning

This novel portrays the life of Layla, a girl who lived during the 1950s and struggled with the dominance of her father's authority and the pre-conceived notions about women at the time. Despite the fear she lived in, Layla's agentive quality was evident all throughout her life story. Her struggle as a woman and a daughter was represented in her utterances in which her subject positioning varied tremendously.

In the data, Layla attempts to establish herself as an independent capable girl with the capacity to act on her own; however, the instability of her gender identity under the impositions of her father and society has also been evident. Layla, struggling with her identity and her capacity, could only control events over her love life. Her relationships with Issam, her cousin, and then with Husayn demonstrate an ability to impose her own desires and impulses over them. In the following, Layla establishes her power by assuming the position of the agent:

Example (4)

أنا مش ملكك و لا ملك أى إنسان. أنا حرة.

ʔana miḥ milkak wala milk ʔay ʔinsa:n. ʔana ḥurra. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 131)

Agent

"I am not your property, I am not anyone's property! I am a free person". (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 136)

لن تقنى نفسها فى أحد، لن تذلل نفسها لأحد، لن تضع رقبتها بين يدي أحد.

Lan tafni: nafsaha: fi ʔaḥad, lan tadil nafsaha: li ʔaḥad, lan tadas raqabatha: bayna yaday ʔaḥad. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 190)

Agent

"She was not going to sacrifice herself for anyone, abase herself for anyone. She would not put her neck between anyone's hands". (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 197)

أنا بقرر حقيقة.

ʔana baqarrar ḥaʔi:aʔa. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 346)

Agent

"I'm just confirming a fact". (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 357)

In the first proposition, the subject “*ʔana/I*” acts as a subject of a transitive verb and hence an agent capable of deciding where she positions herself. This also denotes that Layla is establishing her own identity. Note that the negation i.e. the idea of being someone’s property, in the first utterance postulates a rejection, not only to Issam but also to society’s pre-conceived notion that women are men’s possessions. On the other hand, the use of the copular verb *be* as a stative verb demonstrates that Layla is trying to exercise her power and establish a different reality than the commonly-perceived one.

The second and third propositions mark a major milestone in Layla’s life. But note the pro-dropped pronoun in the second proposition. Here, Layla is referring to herself in the third person, “*hiya/she*”, as a subject of a transitive verb which reveals that she has distanced herself from the matters that might overpower her. In the context of this utterance, she is fighting her feelings for Husayn and hence she is determined to alienate him and anyone who would make her lose herself; her identity as an independent and capable person.

Meanwhile, the third proposition denotes a revelation in which she chooses to stay with the man she loves and leaves her controlling fiancée. In essence, being an agent mandates the capacity to act out the part, to assume responsibility, and bear the consequences, which has been evident in Layla’s resolution. It is also noteworthy to pinpoint the relation between the subject and the object in this example. The subject, “*ʔana/I*”, is concurrent with the verb “*yuqarrir/decide*” denoting authority and control over her reality.

Hence, it is important to point out that the grammatical positioning of the subject plays an important role. From the beginning of the novel, Layla has been struggling with the constraints imposed on her by her father as well as society. In many contexts, she has been deprived of her rights as a person and a citizen to express her own opinion. In the below context, Layla has been punished for participating in protests with the rest of her colleagues:

Example (5)

لو قفلت ميت باب مش هيبعدوا عنى، دايمًا ويايا، دلوقتى ويايا، حتى و الباب مقفول...و لا دقيقة أحلم و لا دقيقة أفكر فى شىء تانى.

law ʔafalt mi:t ba:b miʃ hayebʕido ʕani, dayman wa:yaya delwaʔti wa:yaya hatta wil ba:b maʔful...wala diʔi:ʔa ʔaḥlam wala diʔi:ʔa ʔafakkar fi fiʔ ta:ni (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 46)

Subject

I could close a hundred doors but they still wouldn't go away. They won't leave me alone, they're always there, even right now with the door shut tight. There isn't a single moment when I can forget, when I can dream, no, not a second when I can just think about anything I want, in any way I want, (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 52)

غلطانة، فعلا غلطانة، عبرت عن شعورى زى ما أكون إنسانة ... و نسيت إنى بنت..ست.

Galtana, fiʕlan galtana, ʕabbart ʕan fuʕu:ri: zay ma ʔaku:n ʔinsa:n...wi nisi:t ʔini bint..sit. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 50)

Subject

“Wrong. Yes, indeed, I was wrong. I showed what I felt as if I were a real human being. I forgot..., I'm only a girl. A woman”. (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 56)

أنا أتقتلت خلاص، انتهيت، بعد اللي حصل النهاردة كل حاجة اتغيرت، ما بقيتش إنسانة.

ʔana ʔitʔatalt xalaʕ, ʔintahayt, baʕd ʔilli ḥasal ʔinaharda kol ḥaga ʔitaḡayarit, mabaʔitf ʔinsana (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 49).

Object

“I've been killed, that's it, and it's all over. After what happened today, everything has changed, I'm not a person anymore,” (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 55)

The first and third propositions are typical examples of the absence of agency. In the first, the subject occurs with an intransitive verb to assume several classifications, one as an object “*miʃ hayebʕido ʕani/they will not stay away*”, then as an agent only once in the conditional statement. As for the rest of the utterance, she is a subject, i.e. subject of an intransitive verb, which shows that she has been denied of the most basic and primitive capacities to dream and to think. On the other hand, the third proposition marks her complete defeat and her utter surrender to her destiny. This has been proven by her positioning as an object, “*ʔana ʔitʔatalt/I've been killed*”, in a passive statement. Both examples mark the torment of the character under the restraints and impositions she has had to endure.

The second segment, on the other hand, projects a significant aspect of Layla's identity. She is completely aware of the source of her dilemma, which is being “*a girl...a woman*”

amidst a society that shuns women for having their own voice. The verbs “*yuṣabbir/express*” and “*yansa:/forget*” are both intransitive verbs making the pro-dropped pronoun, “*ʔana/I*”, a subject with no object or recipient of the action. It is noteworthy to point out that the projection of women, presented by this example, poses the issue of the interaction between agency and gender identity since this particular example shows that there is no room for women to negotiate their place. Hence, the category of women, in this example, is equal to a powerless entity incapable of exercising their earned right to voice their opinions and possibly affect other people’s behavior.

4.2.2.2 The Category of Voice

The character of Layla is quite different from that of Amina in terms of showing signs of resistance to the oppression of her father and the impositions of her fiancée. This has been evident, not only in the subject positioning but also through the voice construction of her utterances, which is tremendously important to the semantics of meaning as well. Henley, Miller, and Beazley (1995) point out that “verb voice differentially biases readers and hearers toward seeing the subject or object of a sentence as the primary actor” (p. 62). To be more specific, the analysis of the data revealed that almost all of the sentences were in the active form. From the beginning to the progression and wind down of the events, the reader knows who is the ‘primary actor’ responsible for how events change and evolve, whether the parents, Layla, or her fiancée.

However, the analysis has unfolded one occurrence of the passive voice in “*ʔana ʔitʔatalt xalaş/I’ve been killed*”, which demonstrates to the readers who is the victim and who is the victimizer. Important to note that the passive voice, here, did not obscure the identity of her parents only, but the identity of the dominant group, i.e. society. This shows that Layla has been victimized by the constraints she has been living in, which marks her complete attestation

to her own destiny. The passive construction has shown that Layla's agency is irrevocably denied and her life is completely changed.

4.2.2.3 Analysis of Grammatical Structures (Representative Sample)

Table 5 compiles the classification of the grammatical categories in the representative sample extracted from the novel. The table also shows the various subject positioning Layla has assumed in the contextual utterances, the purpose of which is to elicit a trend of her assumed agency:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
BM 1	<i>law ʔafalt mi:t ba:b mif hayebʕido ʕani, dayman wa:yaya delwaʔt wa:yaya ʕatta wil ba:b maʔful "I could close a hundred doors but they still wouldn't go away"</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>wala diʔi:ʔa ʔaʕlam wala diʔi:ʔa ʔafakkar fi fiʔ ta:ni. "There isn't a single moment ... when I can dream".</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
BM 2	<i>ʔana ʔitʔatalt xalaʕ, ʔintahayt "I've been killed, that's it, and it's all over"</i>	"ʔana/I"	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Passive
	<i>kol ʕaga ʔitaɣayarit, mabaʔitʕ ʔinsana. "everything has changed, I'm not a person anymore".</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
BM 3	<i>ʕabbart ʕan fuʕu:ri: zay ma ʔaku:n ʔinsa:n "I showed what I felt as if I were a real human being"</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
	<i>wi nisi:t ʔini bint...sit "I forgot..., I'm only a girl. A woman.". </i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
BM 4	<i>ʔana mif milkak wala milk ʔay ʔinsa:n "I am not your property, I am not anyone's property!"</i>	"ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>ʔana ʕurra "I am a free person".</i>	"ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
BM 5	<i>Lan tafni: nafsaha: fi ʔahad, “She was not going to sacrifice herself for anyone”</i>	pro-dropped “ <i>hiya/she</i> ”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>lan tadil nafsaha: li ʔahad, “abase herself for anyone”</i>	pro-dropped “ <i>hiya/she</i> ”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>lan taḍaṣ raqabatha: bayn yaday ʔahad. “She would not put her neck between anyone’s hands.”</i>	pro-dropped “ <i>hiya/she</i> ”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
BM 6	<i>ʕala ʔil xuf maʕa Ramzi haʕi:f. ʕala ʔil xuf, wi yum baʕd yum dammi: ʔayinʕaf min ʔil xuf, ʔil xuf ʔilli: ra:h wi ʔil xuf ʔilli: gay “With Ramzy, I will always live in fear...Just fear. Day after day the fear will freeze my blood, fear of what has been lost and fear of what will be...”</i>	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
BM 7	<i>ʔahadhi: hiya ʔal muʕgiza ʔallati waʕadtani biha? “Is that the miracle you promised me?”</i>	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>ʔal muʕgiza ʔallati sathizuna: wa tagʕaluna: nanʕud ʔakfanuna: wa nanbaʕiθ ʔaḥraran min gadi:d? “would make us shake off our shrouds and rise, free and strong?”</i>	pro-dropped “ <i>naḥnu/we</i> ”	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Active
BM 8	<i>ʔana baqarrar ʔaʔi:aʔa. “I’m just confirming a fact.”</i>	“ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active

 Table 5 - Analysis of the Grammatical Structures in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maʕtūḥ* (The Open Door)

The above table shows Layla’s struggle to establish her own agency. The segments in which she assumes the position of the agent illustrate Layla’s evolvement of power. In the example “*law ʔafalt mi:t ba:b/I could close a hundred doors*”, Layla is trying to resist the societal and patriarchal impositions that are preventing her from becoming the person she aspires to be. Other examples, however, indicate a different kind of resistance, that of

succumbing to another form of male dominance, whether to her cousin or the man she actually loves.

In other segments, Layla assumes the position of the object to intensify her experience. When Layla assumes that she has been completely finished due to her father's oppression, she exaggerates her suffering by placing herself as an object. Other occasions where she is placed in the object position, e.g. "*ʔahadhi: hiya ʔal muʕgiza ʔallati waʕadtani biha?*/*Is that the miracle you promised me?*", indicate that she has been waiting for a change that would make her realize her own power and her true self.

4.2.2.4 Grammatical Structures (Frequency Count)

Table 6 shows the grammatical structures frequency count in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door):

Grammatical Agents						Voice	
Subject (S)	Percentage	Agent (A)	Percentage	Object (O)	Percentage	Active	Passive
4	27%	8	53%	3	20%	14	1

Table 6 - Grammatical Structures Frequency Count in ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh (The Open Door)

The frequency counts of the grammatical structures in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door) illustrate that Layla mostly assumed the position of the agent, i.e. 53%, while the subject position 27% and the object is 20%. The frequency counts in this case represent a trend that reveals the true essence of Layla's agentive self despite the constraints of her family, fiancée, and other social practices that impose a stigmatized image of women at the time. In terms of the active and passive segments, the numbers show that in most instances the identity of the doers are on display to indicate how they have leverage in the specified context. When Layla is placed as an object, her experience has been intensified as a victim of the pre-conceived notions of her own society.

4.2.3 *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man)

4.2.3.1 Subject Positioning

Amina is a different character from a different time and age than Layla and Amina from *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maʔtūh* (The Open Door) and *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), but still facing the same battles. Represented as a modern girl with her own demons and fears, Amina desperately wanted to give her husband a son but fate has brought her two daughters. As a strong woman, her powers took different shapes and forms; one of which was the determination to please her loved ones. This has been demonstrated in the representation of the subject positioning. In the data analysis, the subject is placed as an agent whenever Amina expresses her desire and determination to have a son. However, as she gets closer to her target, her utterances tend to denote her uncertainty represented in placing herself as a subject. In other occasions, Amina shows her sadness and disappointment by placing herself as the recipient of the action and hence assuming an object position.

The following sample represents the agent position:

Example (6)

لن أتوقف أبدا عن المحاولة لو أصبح عندي عشر بنات. سيأتي يوما وأهدي سليم ولدا.
Lan ʔatawqaf ʔabadan ʔan ʔal muḥawala..law ʔaṣbaḥ ʔindi: ʔaṣr bana:t sayaʔti: yawm wa ʔuhdi: Sali:m waladan. (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 231)

Agent

I will never stop trying even if I have ten girls..One day, I will give Selim a son.

أنا عايزة راجل.. راجل يا سليم يا عبد المجيد.
ʔana ʔayza ra:gil ... ra:gil ya Sali:m ya ʔabd ʔal Maji:d. (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 323).

Agent

I want a man...a man, Selim.

خدتى بتارك و دبجتى و دبجتى بناتنا..و صلتى صرختك للعالم كله.
Xadti: bita:rik..dabaḥtini: wi dabaḥti: bana:tna:.. waṣṣalti: ʔarxitik lil ʔa:lam kulu. (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 362)

Agent

Agent

Agent

You took your revenge..You hurt me and you hurt our daughters in the worst way possible and had the world listen to what you had to say.

The first segment suggests that in her desperate attempts to satisfy her husband, Amina shows resilience to defy her biological capacities. This is evident in the working of the pro-dropped subject “*ʔana/I*”, which co-occurs with the transitive verb “*yatawqaf/stop*” to denote her incessant attempts despite all obstacles. The verb “*yuhdi/give*” is also significant since it has two arguments, the direct being, “*waladan/son*”, and the indirect is “*Selim*”. The proposition also suggests Amina’s perception of her agency, i.e. she is still in control of her destiny to the extent that she remains sure of having a son at some point.

However, when Selim remarries, Amina’s stance completely shifts to the extent that she is asking for a divorce on the grounds of her desire to have a son. In the second sample, she openly expresses her wish by placing herself in the agent position, i.e. “*ʔayza/want*” is a transitive verb, while the object of her demand is the son by which she reverses the roles of the victim and the victimizer. It is important to note that her determination and power have been emphasized by stating the subject, “*ʔana/I*”, directly. In this proposition, the subject has been explicitly stated marking the transformation of Amina’s character.

The final example presented above marks the end of the novel and the last stage of Amina’s evolvement. In this segment, the means by which Selim acknowledges her victory is noteworthy. He resorts to two important grammatical elements. First, all the presented propositions posit the subject as pro-dropped, “*ʔinti:/you*”, to denote the painful reality of her victory. Secondly, the object is clearly stated “*bana:tna:/daughters*” to magnify the impact of her actions. The three verbs “*Xadti/took*”, “*dabaḥṭini/hurt*”, and “*waṣṣalti/delivered*” indicate that she has exercised her agency regardless of the cost she might have had to bear, whether on herself, her husband, or her daughters.

In terms of the grammatical positioning of Amina as a subject and an object, below is a sample:

Example (7)

من قال أنها لم تحلم يوماً بذكر؟

Man qa:l ʔa:naha lam taḥlum biḍakar? (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 286).

Subject

Who said she never wished for a boy?

أمينة عزت لن تكون مديحة أخرى تحيا مع خائن.

ʔami:na ʕizzat lan taku:n Madi:ḥa ʔuxra: taḥya: maʕa xa:ʔin. (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 287).

Subject

Amina Ezzat will not be another Madeeha living with a deceitful husband.

ما يبجني أننى لم أستطع إبعاده.

Ma yaḍbahuni: ʔanani: lam ʔastati? ʔisʕadahu: (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 94-95)

Object

What kills me is that I was not able to please him.

By posing the question presented in the first segment, Amina is questioning her identity, her wishes, needs, and agency. All throughout her life, she has been pursuing the achievement of other people's dreams, i.e. her husband, mother-in-law, and even her late mother. Hence, this question marks a transition from being a tool, a mere actor to a moment of truth where she would actually realize her needs and wishes apart from everyone else. The intransitive verb “*yaḥlum/dream*” reveals her perception of her own identity as a mother, a wife, and a woman. By reflecting on her situation, Amina puts forward a question, not to herself, but to all women to pursue their own dreams.

In the second example, Amina refuses the state imposed upon her by her husband. The subject co-occurs with an intransitive verb, “*yaḥya:/live*”, denoting a state of rejection. In her pain as a betrayed wife, Amina regains a sense of her own identity and power. This has been emphasized by her decision not to be another image of her mother and endure the pain of betrayal. In fact, this resolution marks the transitional phase of Amina's agency from a loving wife who would do anything to please her husband to a woman who chooses her own happiness.

Placed as an object, the third proposition highlights a desperate moment in Amina's life. She laments the son she always wanted by expressing her disappointment for failing the people she loves. The meaning is intensified by putting herself at the receiving end of the action showing a sign of guilt.

4.2.3.2 The Category of Voice

In terms of voice, the representative sample showed a demonstration of active sentences in all nine analyzed narratives. In discourse, the passive voice can be used to downplay the importance of the agents or their involvements in the action (Johnstone, 2008); however, Amina is a character who exudes power and determination from the start of the events and hence no passive construction was found in the representative sample. Important to note that at times when Amina loses her control over her life, she manipulates the subject positioning to place herself as the receiver of the action, e.g. "*ma yaḍbaḥuni: ʔanani: lam ʔastati? ʔisʕadahu/What kills me is that I was not able to make him happy*" (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 94-95).

4.2.3.3 Analysis of Grammatical Structures (Representative Sample)

Table 7 shows the grammatical structure analysis from the purposeful sample extracted from *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man). The table includes the textual segments, subject positioning, i.e. subject, agent, or object, descriptor of the grammatical category as well as the voice, whether active or passive.

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
AR 1	<i>ʔiwʕidni: ya Sli:m zay ma kunt ʔawil waḥda ʔiwʕidni: ʔaku:n ʔa:xir waḥda "Promise me, Selim. "I will be your first and your last."</i>	Pro-dropped " <i>ʔana /I</i> "	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Active
AR 2	<i>wi hasammi:h ʕabdul Maji:d ʕashan xatir Sili:m "and I will call him Abdul Majeed for Selim's sake."</i>	Pro-dropped " <i>ʔana/I</i> "	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
AR 3	<i>Kuntu ?atamana: ?an yaku:n gani:ni: ?al ?awwal dakaran “I wish I could have had a boy.”</i>	Pro-dropped “?ana/I”	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
	<i>kuntu haqqan ?uri:du ?is?aduki wa ?is?ad Sili:m! “I really wanted to make you and Selim happy.”</i>	Pro-dropped “?ana/I”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>ma yadbahuni: ?anani: lam ?astati? ?is?adahu: “What kills me is that I was not able to...”</i>	Pro-dropped “?ana/I”	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Active
AR 4	<i>?an numsika nahnu bil bundu:Qiya bayna ?asabi?ina linu?awibuha ?ala: Qulu:bina. “but it is crazy how we can hold the gun and point it to our hearts...”</i>	“nahnu /we”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
AR 5	<i>Lan ?atawqaf ?abadan ?an ?al muhawala. “I will never stop trying”</i>	pro-dropped “?ana/I”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>?uhdi: Sali:m waladan. “I will give Selim a son”</i>	pro-dropped “?ana/I”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
AR 6	<i>Man qa:l ?a:naha lam tahlum bi?akar? “Who said she never wished for a boy?”</i>	pro-dropped “hiya/she”	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
	<i>lan taku:n Madi:ha ?uxra: tahya: ma?a xa:zin. “will not be another Madeeha living with a deceitful husband”</i>	pro-dropped “hiya/she”	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
AR 7	<i>?awza ?arfa? da?wa ?alaq ?ala Sali:m ?abd ?al Maji:d. “I want to file for divorce from Selim Abdel Majeed”</i>	pro-dropped “?ana/I”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
AR 8	<i>?ana ?ayza ra:gil ... ra:gil ya Sali:m. “I want a man...a man, Selim”</i>	“?ana/I”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
AR 9	<i>Xadti: bita:rik..dabahtini: wi dabahti: bana:tna:.. wa?salti: ?arxitik lil ?a:lam kulu. “You took your revenge..You hurt me and you hurt our daughters in the worst way possible and</i>	Pro-dropped “?inti:/you”	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Voice
	<i>had the word listen to what you had to say."</i>					

Table 7 – Analysis of the Grammatical Structures in ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need A Man)

The data shown in the table represent several contexts in which Amina's agentive quality is evident. In most of the samples shown above, the subject positioning of Amina is categorized as an agent. In some instances, Amina assumes the role of the agent as a loving wife who is determined to please her husband, e.g. "wi **hasammi:h** ʕabdul Maji:d ʕashan xatir Sili:m/and I will call him Abdul Majeed for Selim's sake". Meanwhile, other agent positioning is associated with her power as an indignant and frustrated wife "ʕawza **ʔarfaʕ** daʕwa ʔalaq ʕala Sali:m ʕabd ʔal Maji:d/I want to file for divorce from Selim Abdel Majeed". In these examples, Amina's agency is traced throughout marking the evolvement of her gender identity amidst stigmatized norms on the power and dominance of men in society.

4.2.3.4 Grammatical Structures (Frequency Count)

In table 8, the data were regrouped for a comprehensive view of the character's actions:

Grammatical Agents						Voice	
Subject (S)	Percentage	Agent (A)	Percentage	Object (O)	Percentage	Active	Passive
3	23%	8	62%	2	15%	13	0

Table 8 - Grammatical Structure Frequency Count in ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need A Man)

The frequency count of the subject positioning in ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need A Man) indicates that Amina has mostly assumed the subject positioning of the agent, i.e. 62%, as evident in the extracted sample. Depending on the contexts, Amina was mostly a doer in many forms; from a loving generous wife to an indignant betrayed one. When assuming the role of the subject or the object, she laments her powerless state in undoing her husband's

betrayal. In terms of propositional construction, all utterances show the doer of the action as indicated in the prevalent active sentence forms shown above.

4.2.4 *ṣaḡaf* (Passion)

4.2.4.1 Subject Positioning

Zaynab's character takes the reader back to the time of Napoleon Bonaparte and the Mamluk era but with a different perspective. Zaynab does not act like other women at the time, i.e. she is willing to remove her *ṣabaya/dress*, act like the French, and dress like them mindless to the norms of her society and the constraints imposed on women of her age. In her utterances, the way she manipulates her subject positioning is noteworthy. In most utterances where she emphasizes her strong ability, she places herself as an agent. In other cases, when she refers to the circulating rumors about her, she positions herself as the subject, i.e. the subject co-occurs with an intransitive verb. Meanwhile, she becomes the recipient of the action or the patient when referring to her mother's judgment of her actions.

The following represents some of the examples where the subject acts as an agent:

Example (8)

أنا زينب..أفعل ما يحلو لي و أرتدى ما يعجبني.
ʔana Zaynab.. ʔaʔʃalu ma: yaḥlu: li:, wa ʔartadi: ma: yuʕgibni: (Adli, 2017, p. 51)
Agent **Agent**
I am Zaynab...I do what I want and dress the way I want.

لا أرى مشكلة في أن أخلع عبائتي...
La: ʔara muʃkil-a fi: ʔan ʔaxlaʕ ʕabaʔati: ... (Adli, 2017, p. 124)
Agent
I do not see a problem in removing my Abbaya...

لأنني اخترقت كل العادات.
Laʔanni: ʔixtaraqtu kul ʔal ʕada:t (Adli, 2017, p. 131)
Agent
Because I broke all the norms.

In the first segment, Zaynab demonstrates a typical example of the character's ability to exercise her power. She is unafraid to break the mold and act differently. She does not

mind the criticism of the people around her, even her family and most especially her mother. The grammatical construction of her utterance places her as an agent, i.e. subject of transitive verbs “*yafḥalu/do*” and “*yartadi:/dress*”. Despite the restrictive norms of her society at the time, Zaynab was able to establish hers, not only by trying to resemble the French in their behavior and demeanor but also by taking advantage of Bonaparte’s admiration to a girl of her status and age.

Meanwhile, the second action shows that Zaynab is contriving her own norms and practices despite the pre-conceived notions of her society. Her subject positioning as an agent denotes that she did not dress, talk, and sound like the French in resistance to the societal imposition, but devised her own norms to suit the desire of the most powerful man in Egypt at the time. The proposition, “*ʔaxlaḥ ḥabaʔati:/remove my Abbaya*”, is very significant for the analysis of the character’s agentive quality. Her emphatic tone and assertions are indicated by placing herself as the subject of a transitive verb “*yaxlaḥ/remove*”, which shows that her own free will has led her to such action.

The third example indicates the outcomes of Zaynab’s newly-fashioned norms. Note the position of the subject when she refers to herself with the verb “*yaxtariq/break*” in which she assigns herself as an agent of a transitive verb. By positioning the subject as the agent of the action, she is, in fact, assigning herself the consequences of her deeds. This example fits Duranti’s (2004) definition of agency in which the agent’s actions are “object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)” (p. 453).

Similar to other examples from the aforementioned novels, the following are some of the examples where the protagonist is in the subject category:

Example (9)

خرجت كاشفة عن وجهي.

Xaragt ka:fif-a ḥan wajhi:… ʔasmaḥhum yatafaddaqu:n bisi:rati:. (Adli, 2017, p. 131)

Subject

Subject

I revealed my face...I hear their abuse of my reputation.

لا، لن أفيق من أحلامي...

La: lan ʔafi:qu min ʔahla:mi: (Adli, 2017, p. 167)

Subject

No, I will not wake up...

In these examples, Zaynab displays another attempt to resist the impositions of society as well as her mother. In the first part, she complains of the hearsay she has been receiving for resisting their norms. While in the second, she wants to prove to her mother that she has the right to have a different status in society. Hence, the subject co-occurs with the intransitive verbs “*yafi:qu/wake up*” and “*yasmaʕ/hear*”, which do not denote an actual practice of power. The first proposition indicates that she has no control over people’s rumors and defamation, while the second proposes her perceptions of a new possible reality different from what her mother wants to enforce on her.

The following examples illustrate the subject positioning as the object:

Example (10)

و منذ متى لم نحكم بالصوت و اللجام، على الاقل هناك ثمار للخوف من العقاب.

Wa mundu mata: lam nuḥkamu bil ʕawti wal liga:m? ʕala: ʔal ʔaqal huna:ka ʔima:r

Object

lil xawfi min ʔal ʔiqa:b ʔal ʔa:n. (Adli, 2017, p. 49)

And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny? At least we can see an outcome of fearing punishment.

هل بإمكانك ان تحاسبيني على أحلامي؟

Hal biʔimkanuki ʔan tuḥa:sibi:ni: ʕala ʔahla:mi: (Adli, 2017, p. 167)

Object

Can you judge me for what I dream of?

Both segments display the agentic quality of Zaynab’s character in which she shows uniqueness and resilience. From the beginning of events, she shows her true substance, a person with an individualized opinion. However, Zaynab does not separate herself from the rest of the Egyptians at the time, whom she thinks, have to be tyrannized. The Egyptians, herself included, are positioned in the object position to emphasize that she favors living in fear than to endure the corruption of the Mamluk ruling at the time. In the second proposition,

she shows disapproval of her mother's judgment of her actions, which, according to her, are legitimate rights.

4.2.4.2 The Category of Voice

The analysis showed one occurrence of the passive voice which reveals Zaynab's perception of her identity as an Egyptian. The rhetorical question "*Wa munḍu mata: lam nuḥkamu bil ṣawti wal liga:m?/And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny?*" indicates that Zaynab downplays the tyranny and oppression of the enemy regardless of the cost others may bear. This also shows her inclination as an agent to side with whomever she can benefit from at any expense.

4.2.4.3 Analysis of Grammatical Structures (Representative Sample)

Following suit of the aforementioned examples, table 9 provides an analysis of the grammatical structures as a purposeful sample extracted from the novel. The table shows the textual segments, the grammatical category with the descriptor of each classification, and the voice classification, i.e. active or passive:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Verb Voice
SF 1	<i>Wa munḍu mata: lam nuḥkamu bil ṣawti wal liga:m? "And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny?"</i>	pro-dropped "naḥnu/we"	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Passive
SF 2	<i>ʔaḥṣalu ma: yaḥlu: li:, wa ʔartadi: ma: yuṣgibni: "I do what I want and dress the way I want."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
SF 3	<i>ʔan ʔaxlaṣ ṣabaʔati: "I do not see a problem in removing my Abbaya."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
SF 4	<i>ʔixtaraqtu kul ʔal ṣada:t "I broke all the norms."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
	<i>xaragt ka:ṣif-a ṣan wajhi: "revealed my face"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active

Narrative	Textual Segment	Pronoun	Grammatical Agent	Code	Descriptor	Verb Voice
	<i>ʔasmaʕhum yataʕaddaʕu:n bisi:rati: "I hear their abuse of my reputation"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
SF 5	<i>La: lan ʔafi:qu min ʔahla:mi: "No, I will not wake up."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
	<i>hal biʔimkanuki ʔan tuha:sibi:ni: ʕala ʔahla:mi: "can you judge me for what I dream of?"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Object	O	Object of a transitive verb	Active
SF 6	<i>Wa hal tuʕadiqi:na ʔanti ma yagri: baynana:? "Do you believe what is going on between us?"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔanti/you"	Subject	S	Subject of an intransitive verb	Active
	<i>Hal saʔalti: nafsuki: yawman lima ʔanti: huna: maʕalan? "Have you ever asked yourself why you are here?"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔanti/you"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
SF 7	<i>Taxalaʕtu minhu "I got rid of my hair."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
SF 8	<i>Kaʔanani: ʔirtakabtu fa:ʕifa "As if I were a fornicator."</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active
SF 9	<i>Tubtu ʕan ʕa:lika "I repent my sin"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	A	Subject of a transitive verb	Active

 Table 9 - Analysis of the Grammatical Structures in *ʕaʕaf* (Passion)

The analysis of the grammatical structure in the representative data shows that Zaynab's agency takes several forms; one as a girl who defies all the norms of her society as evident in "*ʔixtaraqtu kul ʔal ʕada:t/I broke all the norms*", the other as a lover who would cut off her hair to repel Bonaparte "*Taxalaʕtu minhu/I got rid of my hair*", and finally as a sinner who confesses to her own sins and bearing the repercussions of her own doings "*Tubtu ʕan ʕa:lika/I repent my sin*". Hence, the analysis provides a thorough explanation of the character's agentive dimensions depending on the context of interaction.

4.2.4.4 Grammatical Structures (Frequency Count)

After analyzing the grammatical structures, table 10 shows the frequency counts of the grammatical structures, including the subject categories and the number of active and passive sentences:

Grammatical Agents						Voice	
Subject (S)	Percentage	Agent (A)	Percentage	Object (O)	Percentage	Active	Passive
4	31%	7	54%	2	15%	12	1

*Table 10 - Grammatical Structure Frequency Count in *ṣaḡaf* (Passion)*

In providing the frequency count, the above table shows that Zaynab's character has been an agent 54% of the subject positioning in the representative sample, while 31% as a subject, and 15% as an object. The detailed table of the grammatical structures analysis illustrates that Zaynab is an agent in matters of breaking the rules, pursuing her own desires, and finally repenting the consequences of her actions. Classified as a subject, Zaynab is perceived as more of an actor and less of a participant at times where she has been defamed and ill-spoken of. Finally, her object positioning is relevant to her perceptions of her own identity as an Egyptian and a recipient of criticism on the side of her mother who rejects her rebellious acts.

4.3 Semantic Strategies

The interpretation of the data in all novels helps prove that "the relationship between language and context is a dialogical one where talk defines the context just as much as the context helps define the form and content of linguistic performance" (Duranti and Ochs, 1990, p. 12). In an extension to the context examination, the study investigates the semantic strategies including the semantic roles of the subject, verb types, and sentence moods to provide a thorough account of the characters' agentic dimension. The analysis starts with the

protagonist from *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), Amina, to trace the characteristic elements of her agency as a mother and an oppressed wife at that age and time.

4.3.1 *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk)

4.3.1.1 Semantic Roles and Verb Types

The correlation between agents and verb types are important for the interpretation of Amina's dimension of agency. The analysis, therefore, shows that Amina assumes the role of the agent in situations when she has to act out the responsibility of a mother. The examples shown below illustrate some of the instances where Amina is an active participant with the semantic role of an agent:

Example (11)

سأقول لك رأيي بصراحة..إن يوما أمضى فيه لأخطب لك...

Saʔqu:l laka raʔyi: biṣaraḥa..ʔina yawman ʔamḍi: fi:hi liʔaxtub laka.... (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 142)

Agent

Agent

"I'll give you my frank opinion...The day I go to arrange an engagement for you ..". (p. Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p.122)

و من غيرى يقاتحه؟..سأحدثه و سيوافق..

Wa man ǧayri: yufatiḥu?...saʔuḥadiḥu wa sayuwafiq.. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 144)

Agent

Agent

"Who should bring it up but me?...I'll talk to him, and it will be successful, God willing". (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 123)

و لكن أما مثلك خليقة بأن تفسد أبنائها..

Wa la:kin ʔumman miḫluki xali:qa biʔan tuḥsida ʔabna:ʔaha: (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 150)

Agent

"But a mother like you could ruin her children". (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 128)

لكنه رجائى بحسن نية فرأيت أن أعرض الأمر عليك..

Lakinahu ragani: biḥusn niya faraʔaytu ʔan ʔaʕridu ʔal ʔamru ʕalayka. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 150)

Agent

"It was just a question, sir, with the decision entirely up to you". (p. 128)

In the first and second propositions, Amina assumes her role as a mother, but not a passive one. In matters of proposals and lifetime decisions related to her children, she feels

responsible and hence she acts as an agent. The third segment is representative of an enforced kind of agency as a result of her role as a mother. If we examine her husband's utterance, we find that he assigns her the role of an agent only as a symbol of failure to do her job as a mother. The verb "*yufside/spoil*" is an action verb denoting that the consequences of her ill-rearing are permanent. Meanwhile, Amina attempts, in the fourth to contain her husband's anger by handing over the power to him to have the final decision. She puts herself in the position of an agent, not to perform an action, but rather to assign her husband the responsibility of taking the action. This has been demonstrated from the use of the direct object "*ʔal ʔamru/the matter*" and an indirect object "*ʔalayka/to you*", in which the husband assumes the role of the perceiver. This is a typical example of how power between a husband and a wife is negotiated in a time when women were not a forcing drive in the community.

Other assigned semantic roles of Amina are only represented in being an actor and an undergoer denoting her status as an oppressed wife. The extracts below show how Amina's agency diminishes at the presence of her husband.

Example (12)

أخطأت خطأ كبيراً يا سيدي.

ʔaxtaʔtu xataʔan kabi:ran ya si:di. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 215)

Actor

"I have committed a grave error, sir". (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 182)

كان يضر لي الغضب.

Ka:n yuḍmir liya ʔal ʔadab ...(Mahfouz, 2015, p. 231)

undergoer

"He was angry with me and postponed doing something about it..." (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 197-198)

In the first example, Amina shows remorse and guilt for leaving the house without her husband's permission. The subject assumes the position of an actor who suffers the consequences of her wrong doings. In the second, Amina is an undergoer since she has been expelled from her house for this mistake and hence the semantic strategies are intended to

intensify Amina's sadness. The stative verb "yuḍmir/be angry" emphasizes the built-up rage the husband has for his wife.

4.3.1.2 Sentence Moods

In the variation of the sentence moods, Amina's power relations with various participants in the speech acts are indicative of the type of agency she represents as a woman. Most of the utterances reveal that the indicative mood is utilized to establish Amina's reality as a mother, a wife, and a woman. Below are some of the examples:

Example (13)

سأقول لك رأيي بصراحة. إن يوما أمضى فيه لأخطب لك بنت الحلال ليهو أسعد أيام حياتي.
saʔqu:l laka raʔyi: biṣaraḥa..ʔina yawman ʔamḍi: fi:hi liʔaxtub laka bint ʔal ḥalal lahuwa ʔasʕad ʔaya:m ḥayaty. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 142)

"I'll give you my frank opinion...The day I go to arrange an engagement for you with a decent girl will be the happiest day of my life". (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 122)

سأحدثه وسيرافق.
saʔuḥadiθhu wa sayuwaḥiq.. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 144)

"I'll talk to him, and it will be successful, God willing". (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 123)

As a mother, Amina feels obliged to interfere in her children's life. The first proposition "*saʔqu:l laka raʔyi: biṣaraḥa/ I'll give you my frank opinion*" is in the indicative mood suggesting that it is not ordinary for the family to ask for her opinion on such matters. Meanwhile, the second indicative statement "*liʔaxtub laka bint ʔal ḥalal.../The day I go to arrange an engagement for you...*" presumes that part of mother's duties is to be supportive of her children's choices. The second example also indicates that the children's relationship with the mother is built on openness, while with the father, it is fear that overshadows all aspects of this bond.

As for the imperative and subjunctive moods, the sample shows a few examples in which the imperative was used as a means of encouragement from the children to their mother as in:

Example (14)

إلقى نظرة على الدنيا.

Ṣilqi: nazra ṣala ṣal dunya. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 193)

“Have a look at the world”. (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 166)

On the other hand, Amina uses the subjunctive mood to show remorse and regret for disobeying her husband.

Example (14)

ما كان ينبغي لى أن أفعل.

Ma: ka:n yanbaḡi: li: ṣan ṣaḡḡal. (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 245)

“I shouldn’t have done it...” (Mahfouz, 2001/2015, p. 209)

In regretting her deed and the consequences of her actions, Amina has a new understanding of her agency, which is equivalent to obeying her husband.

4.3.1.3 Analysis of the Semantic Strategies (Representative Sample)

Table 11 shows the analysis of the semantic strategies in the sample extracted from the novel. The table provides the textual segments, subject semantic roles, descriptors, verb types, and sentence moods:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
BQ 1	<i>Saṣatruk laki: ṣamr ṣal tarbiya “I’ll leave the child rearing to you”</i>	pro-dropped “ṣana/I”	Actor	2	The subject here is a performer of the stated action	Stative	Indicative
BQ 2	<i>saṣqu:l laka raṣyi: biṣaraḡa.. ṣina yawman ṣamḡi:fi:hi liṣaxtub... “I’ll give you my frank opinion...The day I go to arrange an engagement for you with a decent ...”</i>	pro-dropped “ṣana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Indicative
	<i>Wa man ḡayri: yuḡatiḡu?... saṣuḡadiṠhu “Who should bring it up but me?...I’ll talk to him,</i>	pro-dropped “ṣana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Interrogative

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
	<i>and it will be successful</i>						
BQ 3	<i>biʔan tuʔsida ʔabna:ʔaha</i> “But a mother like you could ruin her children”	pro-dropped “ <i>hiya/she</i> ”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Indicative
	<i>ʔaʕridu ʔal ʔamru ʕalayka</i> “It was just a question, sir, with the decision entirely up to you”	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Indicative
BQ 4	<i>ʔilqi: nazra ʕala ʔal dunya</i> “Have a look at the world.”	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔanti/you</i> ”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Imperative
BQ 5	<i>ʔaxtaʔtu xataʔan kabi:ran</i> “I have committed a grave error”	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Actor	2	The subject here is a performer of the action	Stative	Indicative
BQ 6	<i>yudmir liya ʔal ʕadab</i> “He was angry with me and postponed doing something about it ...”	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Undergoer	5	The subject here is an experiencer of the event.	Stative	Indicative
BQ 7	<i>Ma: ka:n yanbaʕi: li: ʔan ʔaʕʕal.</i> “I shouldn’t have done it...”	pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Actor	2	The subject here is a performer of the action.	Action	Subjunctive

 Table 11 – Analysis of the Semantic Strategies in *Bayna ʔal-qaʕrayn* (Palace Walk)

The summary provided above shows that Amina assumes the role of the agent only as a mother. Meanwhile, as an oppressed wife with no authority or power in the relationship, Amina is usually a mere performer, e.g. “*ʔaxtaʔtu xataʔan kabi:ran/I have committed a grave error*” or an experiencer of her husband’s anger as in “*yudmir liya ʔal ʕadab/He was angry with me and postponed doing something about it ...*”. With the role of the agent, the frequently used verb type is the action verb, e.g. “*yufʕida/spoil*” and “*yufatiḥ/talk*”. The aim of the table is to provide a holistic semantic pattern of Amina’s agency in various contexts as evident in the analysis above.

4.3.1.4 Semantic Strategies Frequency Count

Table 12 below shows the frequency counts in all representative sample in terms of semantic roles, verb types, and sentence moods:

Semantic roles					Verb Type		Sentence Moods			
Agent	Actor	Perceiver	Instrument	Patient/ undergoer	Action	Stative	Indicative	Interrogative	Imperative	Subjunctive
Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Code 5						
5/56%	3/33%	0/0%	0/0%	1/11%	6/67%	3/33%	6/67%	1/11%	1/11%	1/11%

Table 12 – Semantic Strategies Frequency Count in Bayna ʔal-qasrayn (Palace Walk)

The frequency count of semantic roles and other strategies is meant to highlight Amina's path of action in the representative sample. From the data presented above, Amina has assumed the role of agent 56% of the total propositions, while the actor and undergoer are 33% and 11% respectively. Meanwhile, most of the verbs in the contextual segments are action verbs, amounting to 67%, while the stative verbs are only 33%. As for the sentence moods, the indicative statements are prevalent, i.e. 67%. Other sentence moods are the interrogative, imperative, and subjunctive with a one-time occurrence, i.e. 11%, in the utterances extracted from the novel.

4.3.2 ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ (The Open Door)

4.3.2.1 Semantic Roles and Verb Types

Before explaining Layla's semantic roles, it is important to define what constitutes an agent. Duranti and Ochs (1990) indicate that the term "agents seem associated with a stance that assumes accountability if not premeditated actions by the Agent participant" (p. 12). From that explanation, the analysis of Layla's character should be placed within her stance and position in her oppressive patriarchal society. During the course of her life, Layla finds herself confronting situations in which she needs to set boundaries and establish herself as an

independent person. Below are some of these examples where she assumes the role of an agent:

Example (15)

لو قفلت ميت باب مش هيبعدوا عنى، دايما وياي دلوقتى ويايا حتى و الباب مقفول.
law ʔafalt mi:t ba:b mif hayebʕido ʕani, dayman wa:yaya delwaʔti wa:yay ʕatta wil ba:b maʔfu:l (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 46)

Agent

“I could close a hundred doors but they still wouldn’t go away. They won’t leave me alone, they’re always there, even right now with the door shut tight”. (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 52)

أنا مش ملكك و لا ملك أى إنسان. أنا حرة.
ʔana mif milkak wala milk ʔay ʔinsa:n. ʔana ʕurra. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 131)

Agent

“I am not your property, I am not anyone’s property! I am a free person”. (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 136)

From the early stages of her life, Layla has been trying to mark her territorial authority. However, she has been pushed aside by the overpowering effect of her parents, her father in particular. The first instance follows her punishment for participating in political protests, which shows that that she has been denied the most basic and primitive capacities to be independent and free. In the second example, Layla establishes herself as an agent as a means of refusal to male dominance and the association of women as mere possessions. Issam, her cousin, presupposes that as a woman and a love interest, she is a property, not a separate entity. Important to note that in this context, Layla has leverage over the situation. Her agency, here, is associated with freedom from impositions of masculine constraints that Issam represents. In the first extract, the action verb “*yaqfil/close*” highlights her incessant trials for independence, while in the second, the copular stative verb “*yaku:n/be*” emphasizes her perception that she was born free.

In other examples, Layla assumes the roles of the actor, patient, undergoer, perceiver, and instrument as shown respectively in the following example:

Example (16)

عبرت عن شعوري زى ما أكون إنسان.. ونسيت أنى بنت..ست.

ġabbart ġan fuġu:ri: zay ma ʔaku:n ʔinsa:n...wi nisi:t ʔini bint..sit. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 50)

Actor

"I showed what I felt as if I were a real human being. I forgot..., I'm only a girl. A woman". (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 56)

أنا أتقتلت خلاص، أنتهيت، بعد اللي حصل النهاردة.

ʔana ʔitʔatal xalaṣ, ʔintahayt, baʔd ʔilli ḡasal ʔinaharda (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 49).

Patient

"I've been killed, that's it, and it's all over. After what happened today, everything has changed, I'm not a person anymore," (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 55)

كل حاجة أتغيرت، ما بقيتش إنسانة.

Kul ḡaga ʔitaḡayarit, mabaʔitf ʔinsana (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 49).

Undergoer

"After what happened today, everything has changed, I'm not a person anymore," (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 55)

أهذه هى المعجزة التو وعدتني بها؟

ʔaha:ḡhi: hiya ʔal muḡgiza ʔallati waḡadtani biha:? (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 306)

Perceiver

"Is this the miracle you promised me?" (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 318)

لن تضع رقبتها بين يدي أحد.

lan taḡaṣ raqabatha: bayn yaday ʔaḡad. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 190)

Instrument

"She would not put her neck between anyone's hands". (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 197)

The variety of roles Layla assumes are semantically indicative of her struggle as a woman to defy patriarchal authority and male dominance. As an actor, she is completely aware of the source of her dilemma, that of being "a girl...a woman" in a society that shuns women for having their own voice. This projection poses the issue of the interaction between agency and gender identity since this particular example shows that there is no place for negotiation. The category of women, in this example, is equal to a powerless entity, incapable of exercising their earned right to voice their opinions and possibly affect other people's behavior. The subject, here, is in the actor position and the followed verb "yansa:/forget" is in the stative form to demonstrate society's perception toward women like Layla.

Meanwhile, the semantic roles of a patient and an undergoer emphasize the absence of power and the underlying struggle of Layla. The subject, in the first part, acts as a patient, i.e. a victim, while the second marks a complete absence of the subject. By the third proposition, the subject is also an undergoer. In a dilemma of this kind, the author resorted to the use of stative verbs “*ʔintahayt/done*”, “*ʔitaḡayarit/changed*”, and “*mabaʔitf/am*” to denote Layla’s incapacity to act. On the other hand, the only action verb, “*ʔitʔatalt/finished*”, was used in a proposition in which the subject has been acted upon. Towards that end, the semantic connotations have contributed to the meaning and emphasized a complete absence of agency.

When Egyptians revolutionized against their oppressor, Layla’s has been placed as a perceiver. Her role denotes not only the agency of Layla but that of a collective Egyptian identity in which the impossible happens. In a time where miracles in Egypt happened every day, Layla herself did not believe in miracles. In the first question, she assigns the power to the “*ʔal muḡiza/the miracle*” while the object is “we”, a category of honest and true Egyptians to which she belongs. The verb “*wafadtani/promise*” is a stative verb which denotes that she did not try to achieve the miracle but was waiting for it to happen.

The example in which Layla is placed as an instrument marks another milestone in her life. She is now determined to alienate anyone who would make her lose herself; her identity as an independent and capable human. In the proposition, she, as a subject, is contextualized within the performative verb, “*taḡaṣ/put her neck between anyone’s hands*”, indicating that she would not accept the humiliation that comes with love. This determination poses another dimension of agency that has not been brought about before. Layla’s lost battles with love have pushed her to fight her own feelings.

4.3.2.2 Sentence Moods

The display of sentence moods all throughout shows Layla’s turbulent endeavors to find her own power despite all obstacles. With the start of events, Layla’s struggle for the

exercise of her agency begins. When punished by her father for participating in the political protests, she uses the conditional mood in “*law ʔafalt mi:t ba:b mif ʔayebʕido ʕani/ I could close a hundred doors but they still wouldn’t go away*”. This shows her desperate attempts to be an agent, which has ended up in failure. This marks the beginning of her troubles.

With the indicative moods, Layla tries to find some grounds on which she could establish herself as an independent human being. In the propositions “*kol ʔaga ʔitaḡayarit, mabaʔitf ʔinsana/everything has changed, I’m not a person anymore*”, “*wi nisi:t ʔini bint..sit/I forgot..., I’m only a girl. A woman.*”, and “*ʔana baqarrar ʔaʔi:aʔ/I’m just confirming a fact.*”, Layla has evolved from an obedient surrendering daughter and fiancée to an independent and capable person. The propositions also mark the transition from an utter absence of agency to a complete exercise of power.

Important to note that there is one instance in which the interrogative mood was used, “*ʔahadhi: hiya ʔal muʕgiza ʔallati waʕadtani biha:ʔ/Is that the miracle you promised me?*”. This rhetorical question indicates that her life was full of constant doubt, not only in her ability but also in the capacity of others.

4.3.2.3 Analysis of the Semantic Strategies (Representative Sample)

The following table provides a detailed account of the semantic strategies used in the purposeful sample. The table includes the segments, semantic roles of the subject, verb types, and sentence moods.

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
BM 1	<i>law ʔafalt mi:t ba:b mif ʔayebʕido ʕani, dayman wa:yaya delwaʔt wa:yay ʔatta wil ba:b maʔful “I could close a hundred doors but they still wouldn’t go away”</i>	Pro-dropped “ <i>ʔana/I</i> ”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Action	Conditional
	<i>wala diʔi:ʔa ʔaḡlam wala diʔi:ʔa ʔafakkar fi fiʔ ta:ni.</i>	Pro-dropped	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the	Stative	Indicative

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
	"There isn't a single moment ... when I can dream".	"ʔana/I"			described state		
BM 2	ʔana ʔitʔatalt xalaʃ, ʔintahayt "I've been killed, that's it, and it's all over"	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Patient	5	The subject is affected by the action	Action	Indicative
	kol ʔaga ʔitaḡayarit, mabaʔitf ʔinsana. "everything has changed, I'm not a person anymore".	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Undergoer	5	The subject is an experiencer.	Stative	Indicative
BM 3	ʃabbart ʃan fuʃu:ri: zay ma ʔaku:n ʔnsa:n "I showed what I felt as if I were a real human being"	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Actor	2	The subject here is a mere performer of the action.	Stative	Indicative
	wi nisi:t ʔini bint..sit "I forgot..., I'm only a girl. A woman."	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative
BM 4	ʔana miʃ milkak wala milk ʔay ʔinsa:n "I am not your property, I am not anyone's property!"	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative
	ʔana ʔurra "I am a free person".	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative
BM 5	Lan tafni: nafsaha: fi ʔaḡad, "She was not going to sacrifice herself for anyone"	Pro-dropped "hiya/S he"	Patient	5	The subject is affected by the action	Stative	Indicative
	lan taḡil nafsaha: li ʔaḡad, "abase herself for anyone"	Pro-dropped "hiya/S he"	Patient	5	The subject is affected by the action	Stative	Indicative
	lan taḡaʃ raqabatha: bayn yaday ʔaḡad. "She would not put her neck between anyone's hands."	Pro-dropped "hiya/S he"	Instrument	4	The subject here is a means by which the action is carried out	Action	Indicative
BM 6	ʃala ʔil xuf maʃa Ramzi haʃi:f.. ʃala ʔil xuf, wi yum bad yum dammi: ʔayinfaf min ʔil xuf, ʔil xuf ʔilli: ra:h wi ʔil xuf ʔilli:ḡay "With Ramzy, I will always live in fear...Just fear. Day after	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Actor	2	The subject here is a mere performer of the action	Stative	Indicative

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
	<i>day the fear will freeze my blood, fear of what has been lost and fear of what will be...</i>						
	<i>ʔahadhi: hiya ʔal muʕgiza ʔallati waʕadtani biha:ʔ “Is that the miracle you promised me?”</i>	Pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Interrogative
BM 7	<i>ʔal muʕgiza ʔallati sathizuna: wa tagʕaluna: nanfud ʔakfanuna: wa nanbaʕiθʔaḥraran min gadi:d? “would make us shake off our shrouds and rise, free and strong?”</i>	Pro-dropped “naḥnu/we”	Undergoer	5	The subject is an experiencer.	Action	Interrogative
BM 8	<i>ʔana baqarrar ḥaʔi:aʔ. “I’m just confirming a fact.”</i>	Pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action.	Action	Indicative

Table 13 - Analysis of the Semantic Strategies in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maʕtūḥ* (The Open Door)

From the analysis shown above, Layla’s struggle to find her true self is obvious. In most of the instances she assumes the role of the perceiver of her own absence of agency as in “*wala diʔi:ʔa ʔaḥlam wala diʔi:ʔa ʔafakkar fi fiʔ ta:ni/There isn’t a single moment ..., when I can dream*” or her perception of herself as an independent person as in “*ʔana ḥurra/I am a free person*”. Her agent role comes at the end of her pursuit towards her own identity as in “*ʔana baqarrar ḥaʔi:aʔa/I’m just confirming a fact*”. In other cases, she is mostly a patient or an experiencer of her father’s as well her society’s impositions. The meaning has been emphasized using mostly stative verbs to intensify Layla’s experience. In addition, the indicative mood is mostly prevalent throughout the data in order to confirm the perceptions of Layla’s status as a fact. Nevertheless, the conditional mood has been used during her earlier utterances as a means of lamenting her own fate as an oppressed daughter in addition to the interrogative mood in which Layla convinces herself that miracles are possible.

4.3.2.4 Semantic Strategies Frequency Count

Table 14 shows how lexical and semantic connotations were classified, coded, and counted to provide a collective trend of Layla's agentic dimension:

Semantic roles					Verb Type		Sentence Moods			
Agent	Actor	Perceiver	Instrument	Patient/ undergoer	Action	Stative	Indicative	Interrogative	Imperative	Conditional
Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Code 5						
2/13%	2/13%	5/33%	1/7%	5/33%	5/33%	10/67%	12/80%	2/13%	0	1/7%

Table 14 - Semantic Strategies Frequency Count in ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh (The Open Door)

The above table shows that Layla has mostly assumed the role of the perceiver and a patient amounting to 33% of the total data. Meanwhile, the rate of other roles has only been 13% (as an agent and an actor) and 7% (as an instrument). In addition, stative verbs have been prevalent in the data amounting to 67%, while action verbs 33%. Finally, the prevalent mood is the indicative which confirms Layla's experience as a fact, while the conditional mood has been used to exaggerate her denial of agency under her father's authority. The interrogative mood has been used to indicate that Layla already surrendered to her powerless state until a miracle has awakened her to new possibilities.

4.3.3 ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need a Man)

4.3.3.1 Semantic Roles and Verb Types

This novel ushers in a modern image of women in terms of practicing their rights as capable human beings. In this narrative context, the protagonist, Amina, is an independent woman but with demons of a constant urge to give her husband a son. When all her attempts end in vain, she finds herself married to a deceitful husband, whom, out of pleasing his mother remarries. As a consequence, Amina's unwavering faith in her husband has shaken and she starts retaliating by enforcing her power as a woman who has a right to obtain her desires, i.e. to have a son. The presence of her agency ranges from a loving wife who insists

on having a son and another urge for revenge. In the following examples, Amina assumes the role of an agent:

Example (17)

لن أتوقف أبدا عن المحاولة.. لو أصبح عندي عشر بنات.
Lan ʔatawqaf ʔabadan ʕan ʔal muḥawala..law ʔaṣbaḥ ʕindi: ʕaṣr bana:t (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 231)

Agent

I will never stop trying even if I have ten girls.

عاززة أرفع دعوى طلاق على سليم عبد المجيد لأنه لا ينبغي الذكور.
ʕawza ʔarfaʕ daʕwa ṭalaq ʕala Sali:m ʕabd ʔal Maji:d liʔanahu la: yunʕib ʔal ɖuku:r.
 (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 292).

Agent

I want to file for divorce from Selim Abdel Majeed for his inability to give me a son.

خدتى بتارك و دبجتى و دبجتى بناتنا..وصلتى صرختك للعالم كله.
Xadti: bita:rik..dabaḥtini: wi dabaḥti: bana:tna:.. waṣṣalti: ṣarxitik lil ʕa:lam kulu.
 (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 362)

Agent

You took your revenge. You hurt me and you hurt our daughters in the worst way possible and had the world listen to what you had to say.

The above examples show the gradual evolvement of Amina's agency. The first segment indicates her desperate attempts to satisfy her husband and defying her biological capacities. This is evident in the working of both the subject role, i.e. agent, and the verb type “ʔatawqaf/stop” denoting her incessant attempts despite all obstacles. In the second, Amina puts herself in control of her destiny by retaliating to her husband's betrayal. The subject, here, assumes an agent role co-occurring with the action verb “ʔarfaʕ/file” to exercise her power and present a new gender image. Finally, the third proposition shows the ramifications of her doings and the losses she has caused by seeking revenge regardless of the consequences.

Amina has also acquired other semantic roles, i.e. perceiver, in “*kuntu ḥaqqan ʔuri:du ʔisʕaduki wa ʔisʕad Sili:m/I really wanted to make you and Selim happy*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 94-95). As she laments the son she wants, she shows her frustration also by using the stative verb “ʔuri:du/want”, which demonstrates her helplessness as well. In addition to perceiver,

Amina establishes herself as a patient in “*ma yaḍbaḥuni: ʔanani: lam ʔastati? ʔisʕadahu:/What kills me is that I was not able to make him happy*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 94-95) in which the action verb, “*yaḍbaḥu/kills*”, indicates her loss of control due to her incapacity to defy her physical limitations.

4.3.3.2 Sentence Moods

In *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), there are various sentence moods from indicative to the subjunctive and interrogative. It is noteworthy to point out that the indicative mood has been utilized by Amina to mark her new life resolutions. For example, “*ʔuhdi: Sali:m waladan/I will give Selim a son*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 231), “*lan taku:n Madi:ḥa ʔuxra:/will not be another Madeeha*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 287), and “*ʔana ʕayza ra:gil ... ra:gil ya Sali:m/I want a man...a man, Selim*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 323). These examples highlight her conviction, determination, and resilience in the face of an unexpected dilemma.

Other sentence moods are the subjunctive, e.g. “*kuntu ʔatamana: ʔan yaku:n gani:ni: ʔal ʔawwal ḍakaran/I wish I could have had a boy*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 94-95), utilized as a means of expressing her frustration and powerlessness to please the people she loves. The interrogative mood was present as a rhetorical question in “*man qa:l ʔa:naha lam taḥlum biḍakar?/Who said she never wished for a boy?*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 286) posing the question of Amina’s identity. All throughout, she has been pursuing the achievement of other people’s dreams to the extent that people assumed that she does not want a son. Finally, the analysis showed evidence of the imperative mood in “*ʔiwʕidni: ya Sli:m zay ma kunt ʔawil waḥda ʔiwʕidni: ʔaku:n ʔa:xir waḥda/Promise me, Selim. I will be your first and your last*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 71) in which Amina turns the order into a plea acknowledging Selim’s power as a man to remarry.

4.3.3.3 Analysis of the Semantic Strategies (Representative Sample)

The following table illustrates the analysis of the semantic strategies employed in the novel to highlight Amina's agentive quality in the representative sample extracted from the novel:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
AR 1	<i>ʔiwʕidni: ya Sli:m... "Promise me, Selim..."</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Imperative
AR 2	<i>wi hasammi:h ʕabdu maji:d ʕashan xatir sili:m "and I will call him Abdul Majeed for Selim's sake."</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action	Action	Indicative
AR 3	<i>Kuntu ʔatamana: ʔan yaku:n gani:ni: ʔal ʔawwal ʔakaran "I wish I could have had a boy."</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Subjunctive
	<i>kuntu ʕaqqan ʔuri:du ʔisʕaduki wa ʔisʕad Sili:m! "I really wanted to make you and Selim happy."</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Subjunctive
	<i>ma yadʕabʕuni: ʔanani: lam ʔastati? ʔisʕadahu: "What kills me is that I was not able to".</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Patient	5	The subject is affected by the action	Action	Indicative
AR 4	<i>ʔan numtika naʕnu bil bundu: Qiya bayna ʔasabiʕina linuʕawibuha ʔala: Qulu:bina. "but it is crazy how we can hold the gun and point it to our hearts.."</i>	"naʕnu/we"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Action	Indicative
AR 5	<i>Lan ʔatawqaf ʔabadan ʕan ʔal muhawala. "I will never stop trying"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Action	Indicative

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Moods
	<i>ʔuhdi: Sali:m waladan. "I will give Selim a son"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Action	Indicative
AR 6	<i>Man qa:l ʔa:naha lam taḥlum biḍakar? "Who said she never wished for a boy?"</i>	pro-dropped "hiya/she"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Interrogative
	<i>lan taku:n Madi:ḥa ʔuxra: taḥya: maṣa xa:ʔin. "will not be another Madeeha living with a deceitful husband"</i>	pro-dropped "hiya/she"	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative
AR 7	<i>Ṣawza ʔarfaṣ daṣwa ṭalaq Ṣala Sali:m Ṣabd ʔal Maji:d. "I want to file for divorce from Selim Abdel Majeed"</i>	pro-dropped "ʔana/I"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Action	Indicative
AR 8	<i>ʔana Ṣayza ra:gil ... ra:gil ya Sali:m. "I want a man...a man, Selim"</i>	"ʔana/I"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Stative	Indicative
AR 9	<i>Xadti:bita:rik..dabaḥṭini: wi dabaḥṭi: bana:tna:.. waṣṣalti: ṣarxitik ... " You took your revenge..You hurt me and you hurt our daughters in the worst way possible and had the world listen ..."</i>	Pro-dropped "ʔinti:/you"	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action.	Action	Indicative

 Table 15 - Analysis of the Semantic Strategies in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need A Man)*

Based on the data shown above, Amina's representation of agency marks the involvement of her agency from a determinant wife to a rebellious one who seeks revenge regardless of the consequences. In the beginning, Amina uses her power in an attempt to please her husband by giving him a son, e.g. "*Kuntu ʔatamana: ʔan yaku:n gani:ni: ʔal ʔawwal ḍakaran/I wish I could have had a boy*" (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 94-95). As events unravel and she discovers her husband's marriage, Amina's agency takes the form of

revenge, “*ʕawza ʔarfaʕ daʕwa ʔalaq ʕala Sali:m ʕabd ʔal Maji:d./I want to file for divorce from Selim Abdel Majeed*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 292). In other occasions, Amina assumes the role of a perceiver when she questions her own desires and wishes as a woman and a person, e.g. “*Man qa:l ʔa:naha lam **taħlum** bi ɗakar?/Who said she never wished for a boy?*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 286). Therefore, the table above shows a trajectory of Amina’s agentive evolvement through time.

4.3.3.4 Semantic Strategies Frequency Count

The below table illustrates the frequency count of each semantic strategy throughout the sample extracted from the novel, the purpose of which is to display a prevalent facet of Amina’s agency:

Semantic roles					Verb Type		Sentence Moods			
Agent	Actor	Perceiver	Instrument	Patient/ undergoer	Action	Stative	Indicative	Interrogative	Imperative	Subjunctive
Code 1	Code 2	Code 3	Code 4	Code 5						
6/46%	1/7%	5/39%	0/0%	1/7%	7/53%	6/46%	9/69%	1/7%	1/7%	2/15%

Table 16 - Semantic Strategies Frequency Count in ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need A Man)

The frequency counts as demonstrated in the table show that Amina has mostly assumed the agent role in most propositions, i.e. 46%. Her agency has mostly been associated with her identity as a loving wife in a desperate attempt to please her husband. However, the sudden turn of events culminating in her husband’s marriage has led her to use her power for the sake of revenge. In other propositions, Amina is assigned the role of a perceiver, 39%, in association with her self-reflection of her own desires and wishes. Important to note that the role of the patient is a one-time occurrence in the context where she torments herself over her incapacity to give her husband what he wants marking a total absence of agency.

4.3.4 *ḡaḡaf* (Passion)

4.3.4.1 Semantic Roles and Verb Types

For the fourth novel, the analysis of the semantic strategies followed the same approach. Zaynab, the focal character in this narrative story, is the portrait girl who lived during the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's ruling. Her father, an Azhar man of religion encouraged his daughter to pursue the love of Bonaparte in order to climb up the social ladder. Meanwhile, Zaynab is a girl of ambition who does not mind going against the norms to reach her goals. In her pursuit, she demonstrates a completely different example of women's power at the time. The analysis of her dialogic interaction reveals that she has assumed three main semantic roles, i.e. agent, actor, and perceiver in addition to one instance in which the subject was semantically categorized as the patient.

The following are examples of her agent role:

Example (18)

لأننى اخترقت كل العادات.

Laḡanni: ʔixtaraqt kulu ʔal ʕada:t (Adli, 2017, p. 131)

Agent

Because I broke all the norms.

تخلصت منه حتى لا يلمسه بونابارت مرة أخرى.

Taxalaṣtu minhu ḡatta la: yalmisahu Bonapart mar-a ʔuxra:. (Adli, 2017, p. 222)

Agent

I got rid of my hair so Bonaparte will not touch it again.

كأننى أرتكبت فاحشة.

Kaḡanani: ʔirtakabtu fa:ḡif-a. (Adli, 2017, p. 254)

Agent

As if I were a fornicator.

These examples mark the transformational phases of Zaynab's agency. The first is relevant to her breaking all the rules by dressing, speaking, and acting differently than other women. Hence, the agent role occurs with the action verb “*yaxtariq/break*” to emphasize her agentive quality. In the second, Zaynab wants to alienate Bonaparte by cutting off her hair

and thus resisting his own authority. The action verb “*yataxalaṣ/get rid of*” presumes that she was mindful of her action despite the consequences. Finally, her defamed image has led her to revisit her actions; however, she still does not share the same view of her society of being a fornicator and therefore, the agent role, here, only highlights Zaynab’s self-reflection.

In other examples, Zaynab’s roles are relevant to her being watchful of women’s rumors and hearsay, which she cannot fathom. In these situations, she is either an actor or a perceiver. This is evident in the below sample:

Example (19)

خرجت كاشفة عن وجهي.
xaragt ka:ʃif-a ʕan wajhi:... (Adli, 2017, p. 131)

Actor

I revealed my face...

أسمعهم يتشددون بسيرتي.
ʔasmaʕhum yatafaddaqu:n bisi:rati:. (Adli, 2017, p. 131)

Perceiver

I hear their abuse of my reputation.

Zaynab assigns herself the role of an actor with the action verb “*yaxrug/leave*”, which denotes her indifference to societal judgement and the repercussions of their defamation. It is also noteworthy how she uses action verbs when speaking of her self-initiated actions while using the stative verb “*yasmaʕ/hear*” to refer to others’ hearsay.

Important to note also that the role of the undergoer has been assigned when Zaynab includes herself with the rest of the Egyptians whose welfare comes with tyranny and oppression, according to her opinion, as shown in the below example:

Example (20)

و منذ متى لم نحكم بالصوت و اللجام؟
Wa munḍu mata: lam nuḥkamu bil ʕawti wal liga:m? (Adli, 2017, p. 49)

Undergoer

And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny?

In posing this question, Zaynab provides her perception of Egyptian identity, which completely contradicts with the course of her actions often associated with freedom and resilience.

4.3.4.2 Sentence Moods

The sentence moods in Zaynab's dialogic utterances are significant in describing her exercise of agency. In effect, the analysis of the sampling data has shown that the indicative mood is recurrent in contexts where Zaynab assumes agency as opposed to other interlocutors. i.e. her mother and women of her neighborhood. In "*ʔaʔʔalu ma: yaḥlu: li:, wa ʔartadi: ma: yuʕgibni:/I do what I want and dress the way I want*" (Adli, 2017, p. 51), Zaynab establishes her freedom and power of choice using the indicative mood. In another occasion, she makes a declaration in "*taxalaʕtu minhu/I got rid of my hair*" (Adli, 2017, p. 222) by which she resists Bonaparte's power.

The interrogative mood, however, is evident in situations where Zaynab does not have the upper hand, primarily in her interactions with Bonaparte. In their dialog, he asks her questions which highlight his superior position as the ruler of Egypt who has taken interest in a normal Egyptian girl. For example, "*wa hal tuʕadiqi:na ʔanti ma yagri: baynana: ʔ/Do you believe what is going on between us?*" and "*Hal saʔalti: nafsuki: yawman lima ʔanti: huna: ʔ/Have you ever asked yourself why you are here?*" (Adli, 2017, p. 215). The first question is rhetorical, which marks a tremendous difference in the power relations between them. Meanwhile, the second reveals his curiosity regarding her personality as a woman who chose to act differently than other women.

4.3.4.3 Analysis of the Semantic Strategies (Representative Sample)

Following suit of the aforementioned analysis of the semantic strategies, the sample from *ʔaḡaʔ* (Passion) has been collected, classified, and analyzed based on the semantic roles, verb types, and sentence moods as shown below:

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Mood
SF 1	<i>Wa mundu mata: lam nuḥkamu bil ṣawti wal liga:m? “And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny?”</i>	pro-dropped “naḥnu/we”	Undergoer	5	The subject is an experiencer of the action	Stative	Interrogative
SF 2	<i>ʔaṣṣalu ma: yaḥlu: li:, wa ʔartadi: ma: yuṣgibni: “I do what I want and dress the way I want.”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action	Action	Indicative
SF 3	<i>ʔan ʔaxlaṣ ṣabaʔati: “I do not see a problem in removing my Abbaya.”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action	Action	Indicative
SF 4	<i>ʔixtaraqtu kul ʔal ṣada:t “I broke all the norms.”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the stated action	Action	Indicative
	<i>xaragt ka:ṣif-a ṣan wajhi: “revealed my face”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Actor	2	The subject here is a mere performer of the action	Action	Indicative
	<i>ʔasmaṣhum yataṣaddaḡu:n bisi:rati: “I hear their abuse of my reputation”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative
SF 5	<i>La: lan ʔafi:qu min ʔaḥla:mi: “No, I will not wake up.”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative
	<i>hal biʔimkanuki ʔan tuḥa:sibi:ni: ṣala ʔala:mi: “can you judge me for what I dream of?”</i>	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Undergoer	5	The subject is an experiencer of the action	Action	Interrogative
SF 6	<i>Wa hal tuṣadiqi:na ʔanti ma yagri: baynana:ʔ “Do you believe what is going on between us?”</i>	“ʔanti/you”	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Interrogative
	<i>Hal saʔalti: naṣuki: yawman lima ʔanti: huna: maṠlan? “Have you ever asked yourself why you are here?”</i>	Pro-dropped “ʔanti/you”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Interrogative

Narrative	Textual Segment	Subject	Semantic Role	Code	Descriptor	Verb Type	Sentence Mood
SF 7	<i>Taxalaštu minhu</i> “I got rid of my hair.”	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Indicative
SF 8	<i>Kaʔanani: ʔirtakabtu fa:ħif-a</i> “As if I were a fornicator.”	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Agent	1	The subject here is a doer of the action	Action	Indicative
SF 9	<i>Tubtu ʕan ɖa:lika</i> “I repent my sin”	pro-dropped “ʔana/I”	Perceiver	3	The subject perceives the described state	Stative	Indicative

Table 17 - Analysis of the Semantic Strategies in *ʕağaf* (Passion)

The sample shown above highlights Zaynab’s agency as a rebellious girl who does not comply with the values and traditions of her society. Her agent role, as well as the verb types and sentence moods, project an agency that is closely associated with her ambition to reach the heart of Bonaparte. To reach her goals, Zaynab abolishes the norms and values of her society mindless of the rumors and the consequences of her actions. In other occasions, Zaynab demonstrates her agency in pursuit of true love and hence attempts to repel Bonaparte by cutting off her hair. In this war over who overpowers whom, her utterances confirm the upper hand in the context of interaction. This is evident in the rhetorical question of Bonaparte which marks his authority as a powerful man. Therefore, the analysis of the semantic strategies has been significant for the interpretation of Zaynab’s action and to dissect her character dimension.

4.3.4.4 Semantic Strategies Frequency Count

For an overall view of Zaynab’s agency through the semantic strategies, the semantic roles, verb types, and sentence moods were coded, as applicable, and regrouped for frequency counts as shown below:

Semantic roles					Verb Type		Sentence Moods			
Agent	Actor	Perceiver	Instrument	Patient/ undergoer	Action	Stative	Indicative	Interrogative	Imperative	Subjunctive
Code	Code	Code	Code	Code						
1	2	3	4	5						
6/46%	1/7%	4/31%	0/0%	2/15%	8/62%	5/38%	9/69%	4/31%	0/0%	0/0%

Table 18 - Semantic Strategies Frequency Count in *ʕağaf* (Passion)

The frequency count in each semantic category provides a trend of Zaynab's path of action. In the table, Zaynab assumes the role of an agent in 46% of the overall propositions as opposed to the role of the perceiver, which is 31%. This close difference between the two rates indicates the power struggles between pursuing her desires in the face of the negative evaluation of society. The case also applies to the difference in the rates of the action and stative verbs, i.e. 62% to 38%. In addition, the indicative mood has been used to emphasize her attitude towards her actions as factual and affirmative while the interrogative has been mostly used as rhetorical during her interactions with her mother and Bonaparte. In providing the frequency count of each category, the reader is able to conceptualize a comprehensive idea of the character's agentive dimension.

4.4 Discursive Strategies

In the interpretation of the subject agency, the analysis of discourse is significant in terms of how subjects use various discourses and the extent to which they are constituted by them (Bacchi, 2005). For this section, I intend to analyze how subjects negotiate meaning through their discursive structures in order to explain how power discourse constructs and strengthens specific notions of gender identity as evident in the narratives of novels.

4.4.1 *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk)

4.4.1.1 Dialogicality

Dialogicality is defined by Bakhtin (2010) as the continual interaction of a text with other texts. The extent of this interaction becomes "a matter of communicative practice...and a matter of the concomitant links that are thus established between and among utterances" (Bauman, 2005, p. 145). Through using dialogicality in the context of *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), it seems fairly obvious that certain perceptions of women's agency were already preconceived. The way Amina evades the responsibility of upbringing her own children by sarcastically assigning this duty to her daughter posits a projected kind of agency

imposed upon her by society. When Amina says “*Saʔatruk laki: ʔamr ʔal tarbiya*/I’ll leave the child rearing to you” (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 33), she shows an unwillingness to be responsible for the consequences of her being a mother. As a reaction, she repeats what other mothers in her place would say, i.e. leaving matters of raising and educating her children to someone else. This is a preconceived notion that still resides in the hearts and minds of Egyptians to the present day.

In addition to that, another use of dialogicality is identified in the proposition “*ʔilqi: nazra ʔala ʔal dunya*/Have a look at the world” (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 193), which portrays Amina’s deprivation of all the joys of life. In effect, the expression is commonly used and repeated in the Egyptian community as a term of encouragement to motivate others to discover the world around them. But there is also another connotation to infer from this dialogic relation, which is Amina’s unconscious feeling of her lack of agency. The negotiation between Amina and her son, in this context, does not only indicate her powerless state, but also the unawareness of her present condition.

Finally, in the proposition “*ka:n yuḏmir liya ʔal ʕadab ...qa:l liya ʕadiri: bayti: bila: tawanin*/ He was angry with me ...Then he told me, ‘leave my house immediately’” (Mahfouz, 2015, p. 231), Amina chooses to express her powerless state by repeating the dialog that took place between her and her husband. This dialogic relationship had a double fold effect; one is to convey her sadness and the second to show her inability to resist her husband’s oppressive authority.

4.4.2 ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ (The Open Door)

4.4.2.1 Foregrounding and Backgrounding

“The production of a text, and the interaction during which it is produced, is a dynamic process” (Givón, 1987, p.176), a matter which encourages looking beyond the text to what the discourse itself suggests. Hence, to analyze the discourse, all propositions were examined

within a particular frame, i.e. the setting, the language, and other dimensions of background knowledge (extrasituational) (Ochs, 1979). With that frame, the assertion of a proposition as being foregrounded as opposed to what is being backgrounded is contingent with a specific point in the discourse, which tends to shift depending on the context (Givón, 1987). With consideration to the “particular frame”, all characters’ utterances were analyzed within the context in which they were produced. In the following are some of the propositions identified as being foregrounded. The analysis starts with *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door).

In “*wala diʔi:ʔa ʔaḥlam wal diʔi:ʔa ʔafakkar fi fiʔ ta:ni/ There isn’t a single moment when I can forget, when I can dream, no, not a second when I can just think about...*” (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 45), Layla’s dilemma is intensified and foregrounded. In the forefront lies the parents’ interference in Layla’s life and their impositions on her actions. At the background, Layla is helplessly surrendering to the fact that she would never be able to act on her own and break free. Both tools show the struggles a girl her age has to endure in a patriarchal society at the time.

Meanwhile, in

على الخوف مع رمزي هعيش.. على الخوف، و يوم بعد يوم دمي هينشف من الخوف، الخوف اللي راح و الخوف اللي جاي.

ʕala ʔil xuf maʕa Ramzi haʕi:f.. ʕala ʔil xuf, wi yum baʕd yum dammi: ḥayinfaf min ʔil xuf, ʔil xuf ʔilli: ra:h wi ʔil xuf ʔilli:gay. (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 283).

With Ramzy, I will always live in fear...Just fear. Day after day the fear will freeze my blood, fear of what has been lost and fear of what will be” (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 311).

The proposition puts forth a horrid image of Layla’s life with an oppressive opinionated husband, much like her life under her parents’ roof. The aforementioned meaning is conveyed through the shift of tenses from a continuous string of the future simple tense to the present perfect and then back to the future tense. This shift depicts an ugly picture of Layla’s life before and after marriage. She has been deprived all her life of her capacity to choose, decide, and determine what she wants and then fate would force her to live with a controlling self-centered

man for the rest of her life. It is also important to point out that the repetition of the word “*xuff/fear*” intensifies her emotions; her struggle is not over power anymore; but a struggle over identity.

4.4.2.2 Parallelism

In helping the reader concentrate on the message in a given proposition, parallelism is an extremely important tool in discourse. Johnstone (2008) defines parallelism as “when two words or phrases occur near each other in the same or similar grammatical contexts or are structurally linked in some other way” (p.49). In *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), this discourse strategy was employed in one of three ways, 1) to mark Layla’s complete absence of agency, 2) to show her determination for self-assertion, and 3) to intensify her predicament. In what follows, an explanation of the propositions through which parallelism was used is provided.

To emphasize her dilemma, Layla says “*wala diʔi:ʔa aḥlam wala diʔi:ʔa ʔafakkar fi fiʔ ta:ni/ There isn’t a single moment when I can forget, when I can dream, no, not a second when I can just think about anything I want*” (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 46). The parallel construction here intensifies Layla’s experience. Her parents have confiscated her most basic capacities to dream and to think. This is a context where she reflects on her entire identity as a product of a controlling society who deprives women of their most basic rights.

In another context, Layla posits a resolution not to surrender to the powers of love. In fighting her feelings for Husayn, she believes that she would restore her long stolen agency and hence makes the decision to “*Lan tafni: nafsaha: fi ʔaḥad, lan taḍil nafsaha: li ʔaḥad, lan taḍaʕ raqabatha: bayn yaday ʔaḥad/ She was not going to sacrifice herself for anyone, abase herself for anyone. She would not put her neck between anyone’s hands*” (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 190). This proposition emphasizes her actual struggle for self-actualization

since she is torn between her feelings and her perceptions. In essence, Layla is considering her sacrifices as opposed to her gains from pursuing a relationship with Husayn.

Another example where parallelism is employed in “*ʔil xuf ʔilli: ra:h wi ʔil xuf ʔilli:gay/ fear of what has been lost and fear of what will be*” (Al-Zayyat, 2003/2017, p. 311). To intensify her predicament, Layla bases her life with a controlling fiancée on fear resembling her life with a controlling parent and an oppressive society. The parallel construction here is in tandem with the repetition of the word “*xuf/fear*” and the antonyms “*ra:h/ what has been lost*” and “*gay/ what will be*”, all of which paint a horrid image of her life as powerless and agentless.

4.4.3 ʔu:ri:du rajulan (I Need a Man)

4.4.3.1 Foregrounding and backgrounding

The life events of Amina’s character marks a tremendous evolvement from a loving caring wife whose agency is associated with satisfying her loved ones to a vengeful woman whose desire for retaliation is overpowering. In analyzing Amina’s speech acts, it is evident that she has been readjusting her actions to comply with and then to challenge the deeply rooted perceptions of her husband, her mother, and the community as a whole. In pursuing these goals, Amina finds herself at times torn between her desires and her obligations.

In the dialogic relations between Amina and others, many ideologies and perceptions have been foregrounded against others. For instance “*lan ʔatawqaf ʔabadan ʔan ʔal muḥawala..law ʔaṣbaḥ ʕindi: ʕafr bana:t/ I will never stop trying even if I have ten girls*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 231) indicates Amina’s desperate attempts as well as her resilience to defy her biological capacities. Important to note the negative construction of the proposition highlights the continuity of action; while, in the second “*law ʔaṣbaḥ ʕindi: ʕafr bana:t/ if I have ten girls*”, she reaffirms her endeavors by foregrounding the first action against all other. What has been backgrounded in this statement are the obstacles, whether

biological or social that would prevent her from reaching her goal. In the same context, she foregrounds her faith that this day would come “*sayaʔti: yawm/one day*”; however, the indefiniteness of the word “*yawm/one day*” highlights her personal limitations.

Another evidence of the foregrounding strategy is “*xadti: bita:rik..dabaḥtini: wi dabaḥti: bana:tna:/ You took your revenge..You hurt me and you hurt our daughters*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 362), which demonstrates Selim’s acknowledgment of Amina’s victory. This proves that she was able to exercise her agency regardless of the cost and repercussions. Through his acknowledgment, Amina projects herself as a capable woman who does not accept betrayal. However, she has managed to hurt the people she loves the most in pursuit of revenge. In effect, the pain she has caused is foregrounded while her victory is looming at the background meaningless in comparison to the damage she caused.

4.4.4 *ḡaḡaf* (Passion)

4.4.4.1 Parallelism

To emphasize her agency and mark her authority, Zaynab resorts to the parallel structure to project herself not only as assertive but also as a challenging rebellious character. In essence, parallelism is characterized by the co-recursion of similar arguments of the same properties (Hobbs and Kehler, 1997). In Zaynab’s dialogic interaction, this feature has been used to emphasize her agency as an independent woman amidst the disapproval of her society. When she says “*ʔafṣalu ma: yaḥlu: li:, wa ʔartadi: ma: yuṣṡibni:/I do what I want and dress the way I want*” (Adli, 2017, p. 51), Zaynab is unafraid to break the mold and act differently. She does not mind the criticism of the people around her, even her family and most especially her mother. Despite the restrictive norms of her society at the time, Zaynab was able to establish hers, not only by trying to resemble the French in their behavior and demeanor but also by taking advantage of Bonaparte’s admiration to a girl her age. Hence, by

using parallelism, Zaynab establishes her freedom and power of choice as a fact to give prominence to her exercise of agency.

4.5 The Creative Dimensions of Agency and Gender Identity

Tracing the creative processes by which a character was able to devise her own set of norms required an understanding of the temporal effect on reshaping their individuality and self-realization. McNay (1999) states that “one way to understand the durability of gender identity...is to begin to conceptualize the relations between gender identity and the aspect of time” (p. 317). For that purpose, the representations of linguistic constructions denoted several patterns of the characters’ evolvement through time. The below charts illustrate the subject positions’ evolvement across the selected sample:

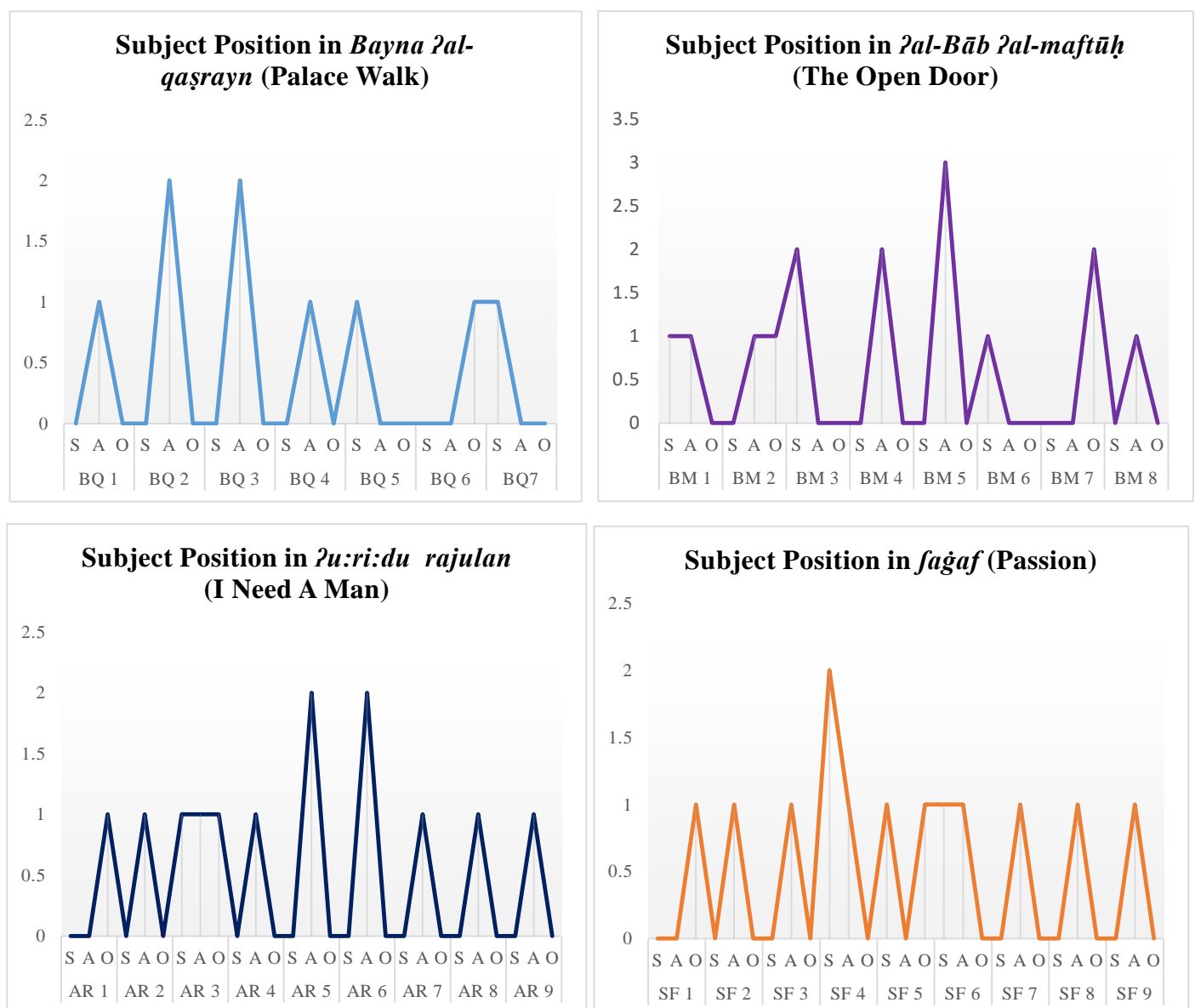


Figure 2 - Comparison of Subject Grammatical Categories

The above illustrations highlight the protagonists' agentive paths across the novels. In effect, Layla in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), Amina in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), and Zaynab in *ʔaḡaf* (Passion) have each followed their road in pursuit of their agency. The trends presented in the aforementioned charts indicate the instability and constant change of their agentive status. As indicated, in each context of interaction, Layla has assumed several grammatical categories ranging from a subject to an object and an agent. The trend highlighted the fluctuating pattern by which her agency has finally taken shape as provided in the last segment. In essence, Layla's power was suppressed by the authority of her parents and the male figures in her life whom denied her the freedom of expression, the right to choose, and the capacity to act on her impulses. In her constant resistance of impositions and finding her true self, Layla was able to choose the man she loves, i.e. Husayn, the job she wants to pursue, and the way she chooses to serve her country. Her unwavering faith among the suffering she had to endure from an oppressive father, a controlling fiancée, and a judging society has led her to devise her own norms as a woman with a strong faith in her power.

For Amina in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), her agency is established from the beginning as she projects herself as a modern independent woman in defiance, not only of her biological capacities but also of stigmatized perceptions of men in society. The figure above represents various grammatical positioning of her as a subject. The representative data from the novel indicate that she has been mostly presented as an agent; however, her agency has evolved from a loving wife to a vengeful determinant woman. By the end of the last context, her power culminated in the pain and suffering of her whole family. In essence, Amina has submerged herself in her desire to give Selim a son and hence complied with the traditions of his community. Her determination and resilience were evident in her constant pursuit to please her husband and her mother-in-law. In an attempt to regain her agency after her husband's marriage, Amina followed a different action path. Thus, her agency transformed into a newly-

fashioned form evident in filing for divorce from her husband on the grounds of his inability to grant her a son. In seeking a divorce, she chose to attain a right that society only grants to men.

Zaynab's agentic path in *ḡaḡaf* (Passion) is noteworthy. In her path to freedom, her character has conquered many obstacles. The illustration presented above shows that she assigned herself several subject positioning depending on her perceptions of her identity, first as an Egyptian (indicated in the first segment), as a woman, and as a subject of humiliation by the end of the novel. Zaynab, a fourteen-year-old-girl, sought a different life from women her age. Her actual pursuit of power lied in her desire to reach a difficult mark, i.e. the attention of Napoleon Bonaparte. To achieve her goal, she ignored her societal constraints which force women to hide their faces, stay at their homes, and marry men of their origin and religion. In doing that, Zaynab has contrived her own set of norms out of her impulse to be different from everyone else.

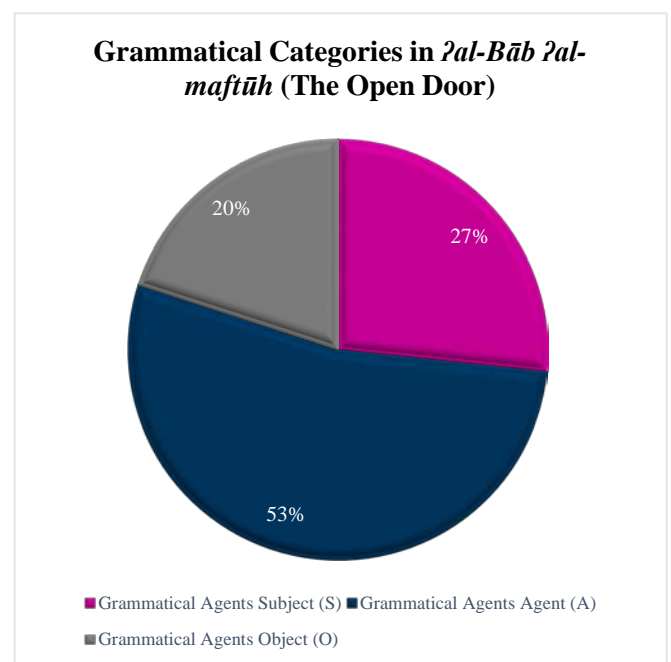
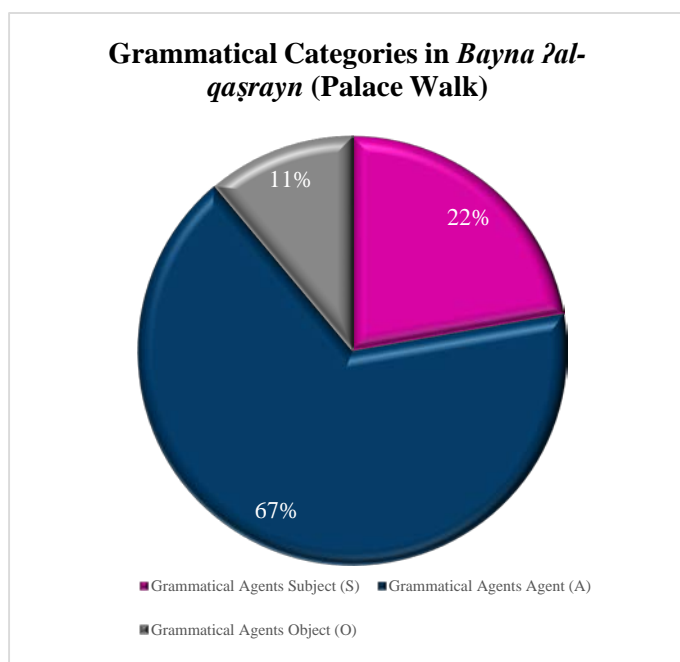
Surprisingly, Zaynab's creative paths took two directions, one when she chose to pursue the attention of Bonaparte and the second when she decided to act on her feelings for Elton and leave Bonaparte. The act of cutting her hair is actually significant in denoting that the power of love has reshaped her to a completely fearless person oblivious of the consequences that might befall her. Eventually, her pursuits failed to do her justice culminating in her unfortunate fate.

Finally, Amina's life in *Bayna ḡal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) is an anomalous character in comparison with the aforementioned protagonists. As illustrated in the chart, the early segments, in which she is placed as an agent, are related to her direct relationship with her children. However, the trend presented above marks the deterioration of her power. Unlike other characters, Amina's agentic path eventually diminishes and deteriorates. Depicted as an oppressed wife and a devoted mother, Amina would only attempt to use her power out of her

crucial role to her family. The key incident in which Amina was urged to assume the role of the agent was in matters related to her children's marriage. Hence, the analysis renders Amina's agency as equivalent to her maternal powers.

In addition, it is important to note that in her state of complete powerlessness, Amina attempted to pursue a novel action when she chose to leave the house without her husband's permission. By performing this action, she pursued another dimension of agency that is irrelevant to free will and resistance to male dominance; a form of agency in which she sought to fulfill her wishes as a woman despite all possible restrictions. However, in admitting her mistake, Amina handed her agency back to her husband to avoid his anger and punishment.

The collective pattern of the protagonists' agency as seen from the grammatical perspective is illustrated below:



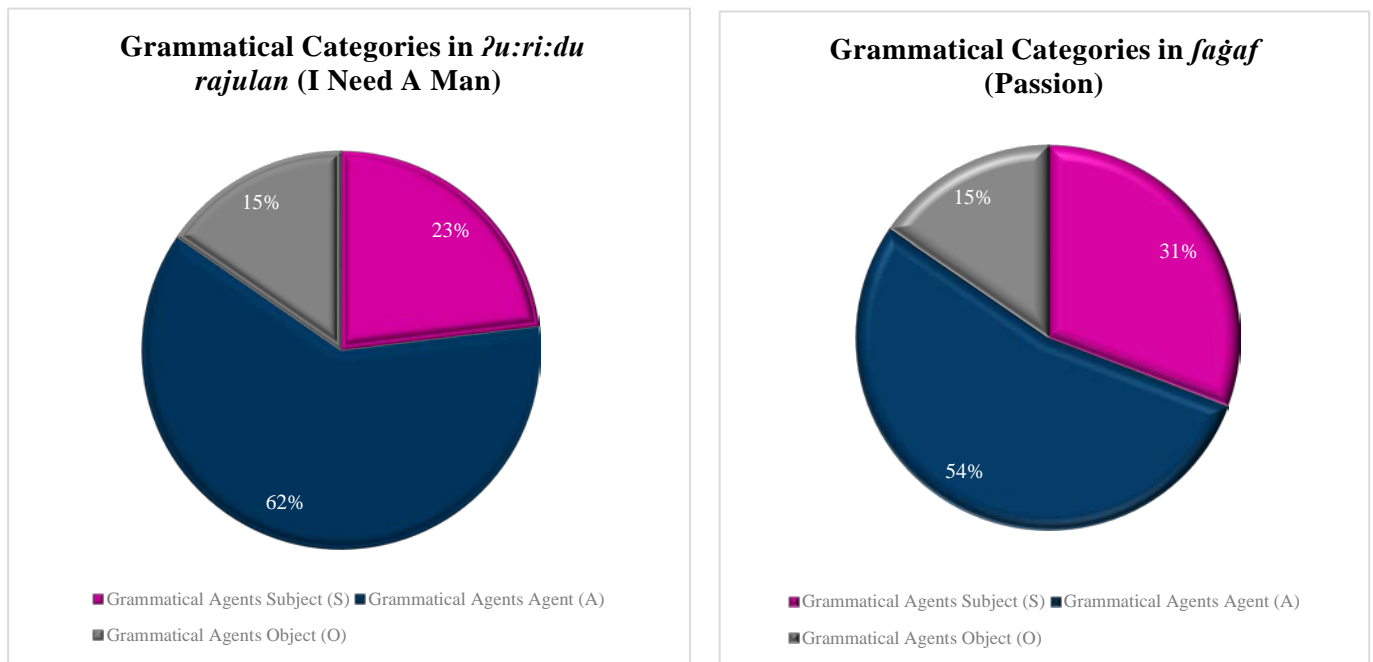
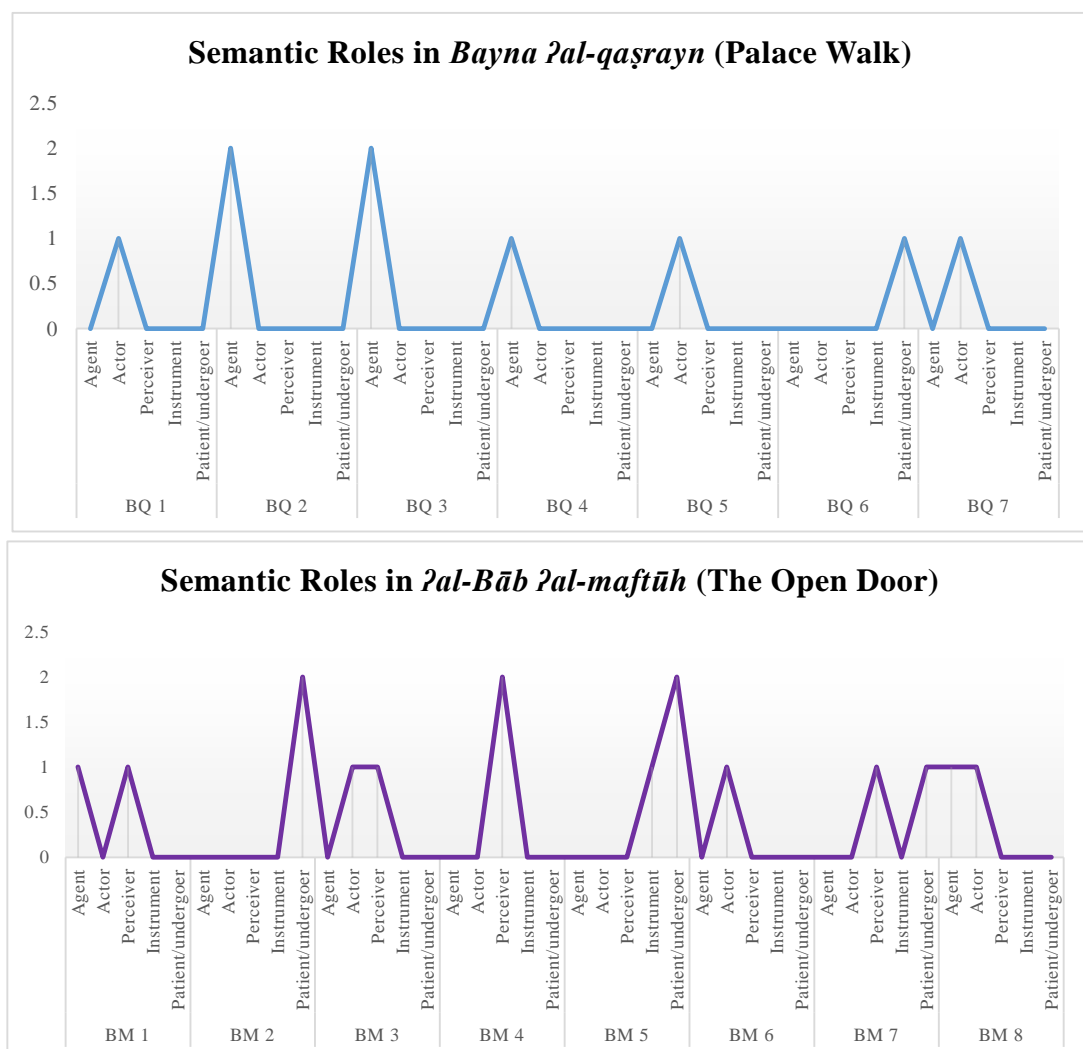


Figure 3 - Comparison – Categories of Grammatical Agents

In addition, the analysis of the semantic strategies has also confirmed the results yielding from the investigation of the grammatical structures. The following four charts illustrate the semantic roles of the protagonists in all four novels:



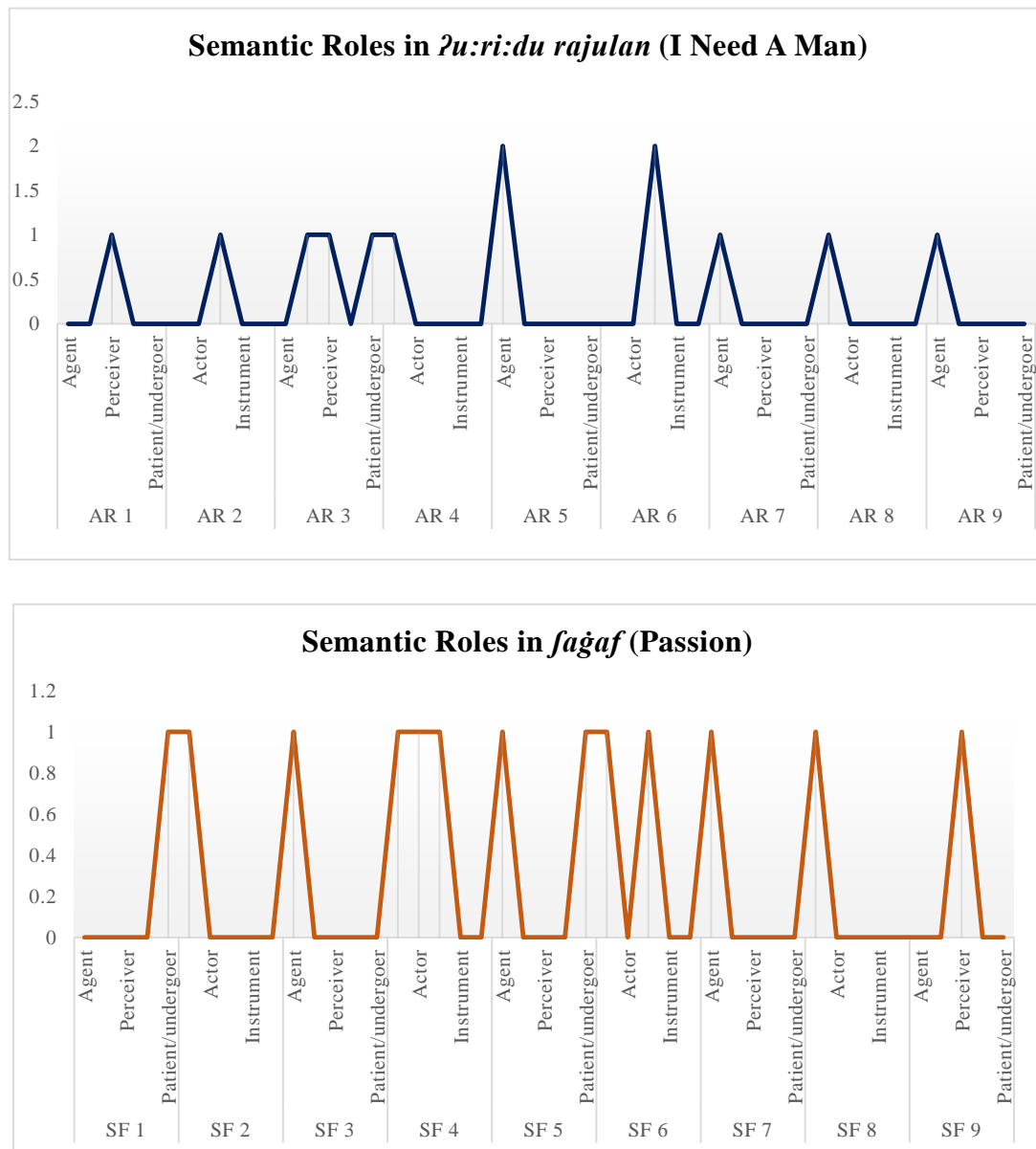


Figure 4- Comparison - Subjects' Semantic Roles

The above figure provides a comparison between the semantic roles of each protagonist in each of the representative contextual segments, the aim of which is to illustrate the implications of the agentic path adopted by each protagonist. In *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), Amina assumed several roles, most of which was the agent as evident in the first four contexts of the novel. As mentioned in the semantic analysis section, Amina was able to perform her agency as a mother in the face of her husband's opposition. This shows that the creative facet of her agency lies only in her role as a mother, i.e. her maternal powers.

Layla, however, had other challenges to face, those of her father's authority together with the social restrictions that forced her to suppress her opinion and surrender to the tyranny of her controlling fiancée. The dialogic relations with her brother, fiancée, father, and Husayn portrayed her demons and conflict between self-realization and total submission. The semantic roles identified in the figure have shown her as a perceiver, an undergoer, and a patient; however, in the last segment, Layla assumed the role of an agent in a moment of self-actualization. Hence, the creative facet of agency for Layla is equivalent to self-actualization.

For Amina in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), her subject's semantic role was mostly associated with her representation as a loving wife. The figure above shows that she assumed the role of the agent to denote her determination to achieve her goal. However, towards the end of the novel, the segments have shown that her power is equivalent to her desire for revenge regardless of the consequences. Therefore, Amina's agency lies in her power to defy the current norms that idolize men and contriving a novice action through which she retaliates and retains her dignity.

Finally, Zaynab's character is remarkable in terms of the path she has chosen for herself. In the beginning, she defied her social norms in pursuit of the attention of Bonaparte, a matter that made her change her looks and her behavior. In the first three segments, Zaynab has assumed the role of the agent conforming to the novice rebellious action she has chosen for herself. However, towards the end, she sought a new action, which is to cut off her hair on the hopes that Bonaparte would be repelled. The two patterns together confirm that Zaynab's agency is equivalent to ambition and love. Therefore, the value of the semantic analysis for this study is to highlight the various roles by which the characters assume agency and the tools by which they were able to devise their own norms and challenge their social status. In essence, the semantic roles of the subjects aligned with a creative pattern by which their gender identity has developed.

The below figure provides a comprehensive pattern of the semantic roles for the protagonists in each novel:

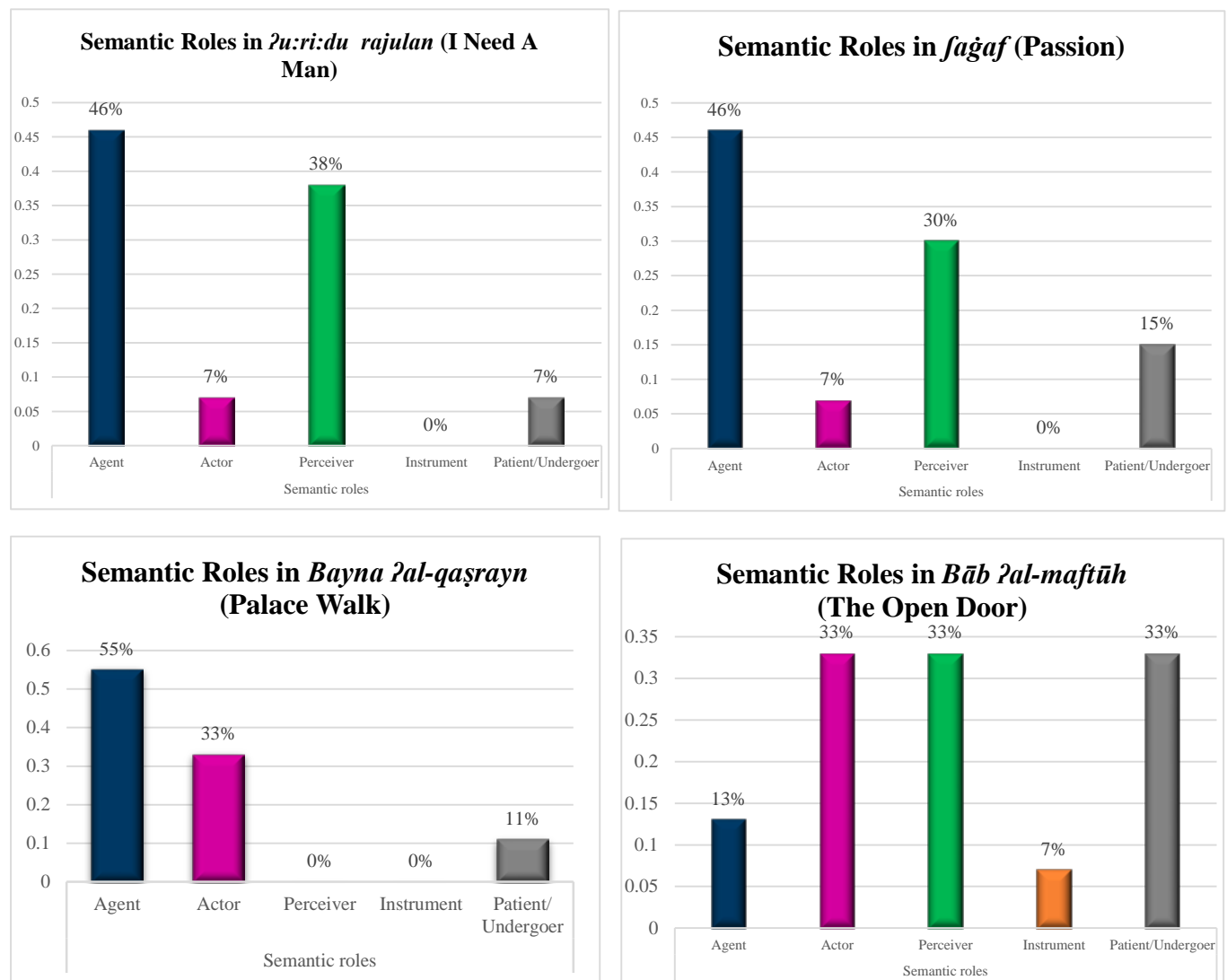


Figure 5- Comparison (Semantic Roles in All Four Novels)

Important to note that, in order to validate the accuracy of the data coding, a second rater was familiarized with Dixon's (1994) grammatical agents' classification and Duranti's (1994) examination of semantic roles. The rater was a previous colleague from the same department to whom the coding of the data was explained in details. A preliminary check on the coding rendered some inquiries on the part of the rater and based on the provided clarifications, a second check indicated that the coding of the grammatical and lexical categories was accurate for results and eliciting conclusions.

In conclusion, the relationship between agency and gender identity is constitutive of certain acts in which women assume specific roles. Butler (2011) points out that “gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (191). The analysis of this study proves that these acts cannot be separated from the male perspective. Thus, in understanding identity and power relations, the perspective of women’s subordination to men should be considered. This notion is grasped in terms of how women position themselves in dialogic discourse by occupying specific subject positions and appropriating the language to assume certain roles.

4.6 Summary of Chapter

This chapter presented the reader with an analysis of the grammatical, semantic, and discursive features employed in all four novels, the aim of which is to investigate a new dimension of agency that is quite different from the commonly perceived ones. In each novel, a purposeful sample has been decontextualized, analyzed in terms of the grammatical structures, i.e. subject category and voice, and semantic strategies represented in the semantic roles of the subject, verb types, and sentence moods. In each novel, a detailed examination of the data has been fully provided in order to present a pattern through which the character followed a different path of action, asserting their own norms and defying their current ones.

In terms of discourse, the analysis included three discursive features, i.e. dialogicality, parallelism, foregrounding and backgrounding. Aiming at linking the linguistic examination with the local textual context, the strategies provided another dimension to the understanding of further character dimension. It is worthy to mention that some of the designated strategies were not identified in the purposeful sample and hence the available tools were only marked.

Finally, the study concludes that each character adopted a creative dimension of agency by which their power was appropriated to adjust to their new social situation. Hence,

it was identified that agency is equivalent to maternal power, in the case of Amina's *Bayna ʔal-qasrayn* (Palace Walk), self-actualization to Layla, revenge for Amina from *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), and ambition and love for Zaynab.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Agency refers to individuals' capacity to act within a socially-constructed context. Typically, any act of speaking involves some form of agency since it constructs a reality that has the possibility of affecting other hearers regardless of the intended audience (Duranti, 2004). This linguistic representation of the construct in discourse has proven the multifunctionality of specific language forms through which agency is manifested and enacted. When considering this correlation between language and agency, it is therefore important to highlight its implications as they emerge in social interactions.

A common tendency in most research is to deal with the social construct of agency in terms of issues related to free will, resistance, and subversion of male dominance (Ahearn, 2001). In this study, I focused on an important element that has been missing from research on gender and discourse, which is the creative aspect of agency in the world of narration. By creativity, there is a proposed dimension to action that allows for autonomous behavior, i.e. the possibility to act in an unexpected fashion instituting new social values to emerge and reproduce.

In essence, this study focused on identifying the creative dimensions of agency in relation to gender identity in four Egyptian novels, *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūḥ* (The Open Door), *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), and *ʔaḡaf* (Passion). The analysis provided in the previous chapter identified five basic concepts associated with the processes of agency in narrative discourse, which are maternal power, self-actualization, revenge, ambition, and love. When reflecting on the findings, it can be concluded that the protagonists contrived novel acts characteristic of a creative representation of agency. Using language as a magnifying glass to the trajectory of subjects' actions and perceptions, narratives have proven to be "a fundamental mode for constructing realities and so as a

privileged structure/system/mode for tapping into identities, particularly constructions of self” (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 380).

Having discussed each linguistic and discursive strategy in details in the previous chapter, the following is a collective approach to the analysis in order to draw conclusions, provide further interpretations, and eventually present a set of implications pertinent to this study.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

5.1.1 Grammatical Strategies

In analyzing the linguistic manifestations of agency, this study considered how grammatical categories distinguish among participants as subjects, agents, or objects. This classification has helped in the examination of how agency is exercised, attributed, or denied in a given interaction. In that sense, the grammatical categories played “a key role in structuring cognitive categories and social fields by constraining the ontology that is taken for granted by the speakers” (Hill & Mannheim 1992, p. 387).

The frequency counts¹⁰ of the grammatical agents, provided in the previous chapter, in all four novels prove that each of these protagonists is, in essence, an agent participant. The analysis proved that each character has some degree of control over their own actions despite several encountered social and patriarchal impediments. In marking their capacity, they have managed to project particular perceptions of their identity, each at her own time. A similar finding was addressed in Duranti and Ochs (1990) investigation of the political Samoan discourse in which they found that various people of political weight establish their identities as active social agents through their use of ergative agents of transitive clauses. In this study

¹⁰ The figures do not assume that one character is more powerful or agentive than the other, but are meant to provide an indicative pattern by which the protagonists were able to negotiate their identity in dialogic interactions.

Amina from *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) assumed the role of the agent 67% in the representative sample while the subject and object positions were 22% and 11% respectively. The figures illustrated in Layla's *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door) are evidence of the power struggle she has encountered since she has been an agent in 54% of the sample propositions, 27% as a subject, and 20% as an object. On the other hand, Amina's *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man) agency has been identified all through her utterances as the grammatical analysis identified that she was placed as an agent 62% of the segments, 23% as a subject, 15% as an object. Finally, the figures illustrated in the chart emphasize the agentive identity of Zaynab's character. The frequency counts indicate that grammatically, she has assumed the agent position 54% of the sample, while a subject and an object 31% and 15% respectively. In some situations, the characters may have the upper hand, but in others, their agency may be denied or completely absent.

Meanwhile, the figures presented in Amina's *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) emphasize what McNay (1999) presumes regarding the relation between agency and creativity that "even the most normative forms of behavior presuppose imaginative elements" (McNay, 1999, pp. 187-188). The fact that she did not distance herself from her actions, i.e. the subject is in direct relation with the object, denotes that she bore full responsibility. This finding resembles Johansen's (2011) in which the discourse of a Danish family's dinner table has emphasized the performed act and the notion of participation through the construction of the 'I' in direct speeches.

In addition to the grammatical categories of the subject, the study also investigated the textual contexts and propositions in terms of the category of voice. In examining the dialogic relations in terms of its construction in the passive or active voice, an important element is elicited with relation to agency. In essence, "the passive voice is often used to portray the agents of an action as unknown, obvious, or unimportant...The passive can also be used to

hide an agent who is known, or downplay the fact that an agent was involved” (Johnstone, 2008, p.55). With Johnstone’s assumption in mind, the analysis revealed a few instances in which the passive voice was used to assume the agent as responsible for the harm caused as in “*ʔana ʔitʔatalʔ xalaʃ /I’ve been killed, that’s it, and it’s all over*” (Al-Zayyat, 2003, p. 49) in which the interlocutor acknowledged Layla’s parents as the agents in this context. Another example from *ʔaḡaf* (Passion) in which Zaynab refers to the oppressive French ruling with the rhetorical question “*Wa munḡu mata: lam nuḡkamu bil ʃawti wal liga:m?/And since when we have not been ruled by tyranny?*” (Adli, 2017, p. 49) to downplay the responsibility of the French ruling and the damage they have caused. Similar to Henley, Miller, and Beazley’s finding on gender bias who found that, in crimes against women, the use of the passive voice is intended to attribute less responsibility on the perpetrator and less harm on the victim as well.

5.1.2 Semantic Strategies

Besides the grammatical categories, the examination of the semantic roles was helpful in analyzing the linguistic representations in order to reach another further dimension to the interpretation of the construct. In the previous chapter, a display of the semantic roles in each contextual segment was analyzed and then compared to the other characters in the novels in order to trace the agentive path of each.

From the analysis in chapter four, the role of the agent is domineering among the other roles except for Layla in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door). In a similar study of language, identity, and learning issues, (Gupta, 2014) highlighted indexes of agency through the semantic content by which women position themselves as agents using the first person subject positioning and the plural ‘we’. This has also been accorded by Cohn and Paczynski (2013) in their study on wordless visual narratives proving that the agent role is crucial for the cause and the orientation of the performed actions.

It is also worth mentioning that the anomalous pattern in Layla's *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door) demonstrates that her character has struggled with finding her own identity amidst the restraints of her father as well as the society. This is represented in the equal percentages in which she has assumed the role of the patient/undergoer and the role of the perceiver, i.e. 33%. As an agent, Layla was able to exercise her power only to reject her association with being a property and to mark the shift of power by which she reached her self-actualization.

As for other characters, there are more demonstrations of agency than Layla. This is confirmed through the prevalent rate of the agent role as opposed to others. For Amina in *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), her agency was confined to her role as a mother. Her image as a parent has been associated with two perceptions. One related to her children who rely on her in avoidance of their father's anger and rejection. The second has to do with her husband's perception of her as a good-for-nothing mother who spoils her children by approving of their actions.

Meanwhile, Amina in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man) has been presented as an agent all throughout (46%) starting from her determination to be a devoted wife to the point where she was keen on seeking revenge through an outcry that showcased her power. In other propositions, she assumed the role of the patient (7%) and the perceiver (38%) in matters where she expressed her helplessness to defy her physical limitations, which underpinned her lack of power.

Lastly, the struggle of Zaynab's character is somehow different. Encouraged by her father, she was able to perform actions that were not in conformity with their traditions and social conventions. The trend analysis presented above showcases her ability to exercise her agency first attaining the attention of Bonaparte and then the capacity to perform an action that would repel him for another man. Other roles in which she was a perceiver were mostly

related to her acknowledgment of the rumors and hearsay of her society with no authority or power to stop them. This evidently shows that Zaynab's agency is associated with ambition and love.

The aforementioned interpretation of agency in terms of love, self-actualization, revenge, and maternal power confirms McNay (2013) suggestion that the limited understanding of agency in terms of concepts of free will and resistance to male dominance rules out the possibility for a creative form of action that transcends the current social norms and the possibility for the emergence of new ones. In providing this pattern, this study accords with Mahmood's (2006) finding on the notion of women's agency and religious piety. In her findings, Mahmood explored a different facet of agency that tackled women's endurance to struggles against gender inequality.

In terms of other semantic strategies, action verbs were prevalent with the agent role in all three novels except for *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk) in which stative verbs were dominant in Amina's utterances. This finding contradicts with Hargreaves (2005) in his study of the intentionality of actions through the inherent semantic meaning of the verbs, who confirmed that "that there is no direct interaction between the lexical properties underlying the control/noncontrol¹¹ categories of the verb and the lexical properties underlying case assignment" (p. 37) and hence he proved that the intentionality underlying the role of the agent is invisible to the linguistic system.

The analysis has shown that action verbs ranged in occurrence while being prevalent in all the other three novels. Important to note that in *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door), stative verbs exceeded the number of active verbs by only one. It is also noteworthy to point out that action verbs co-occurred mostly with the indicative mood, while in imperatives and

¹¹ verbs describing self-initiated behaviors as opposed to verbs describing incompatible ones.

subjunctives, stative verbs were all prevalent. For example, the action verb “*dabaḥa/hurt*” in “*dabaḥtini: wi dabaḥti: bana:tna:/ You hurt me and you hurt our daughters*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, p. 362) occurred with a declarative sentence to establish a reality that emphasized the meaning. Meanwhile, the stative verb “*yatamana/hope*” in “*Kuntu ḡatamana: ḡan yaku:n gani:ni: ḡal ḡawwal Ḍakaran/I wish I could have had a boy*” (Abdul Majeed, 2011, pp. 94-95) was mentioned in the subjunctive mood to describe a hoped state rather than an action. This finding suggests that action verbs establish power and authority when coinciding with the declarative statements in which facts and realities are stated. This is a similar finding to Sicoli’s (2015) who has proven that agency represented in how a participant is active in producing an event is dependent on verb valence and other morphophonological features. The interplay between these two aspects demonstrates the tension between meaning and language in a narrative context.

5.1.3 Discourse and Narratives

Dijk and Kintsch (1983) state that “our knowledge about human goals and actions is absolutely necessary for story understanding” (p. 55). Thus in the interpretation of these texts, the examination of the linguistic strategies together with the discursive ones provided a comprehensive view of the character agentive dimension. The use of dialogicality, parallelism, foregrounding and backgrounding complements the semantic and grammatical analysis in the interpretation of agency. The importance of the discursive feature, namely dialogicality, has been emphasized in Bakhtin’s (1984) analysis of Dostoevsky’s novels as a major tool in highlighting the character’s underlying agency. In *Bayna ḡal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk), Amina projected a pre-conceived notion of mothers’ responsibility toward their children. In addition, some ideas were foregrounded in *ḡal-Bāb ḡal-maftūh* (The Open Door) pertinent to the oppressive state imposed by the male figures in Layla’s life. For Amina in *ḡu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man), her victory over her husband was foregrounded while the

pain she has caused her family was secondary to Amina's painful victory. As for Zaynab, the employment of parallelism emphasized her message to the world as a free person with no obligations or restrictions.

To conclude, the figure below shows the creative agent role of each character:



Figure 6 - The Creative Dimensions of Agency (Four Novels)

5.2 Implications of the Study

This study adopted a different take on agency in order to draw the attention to other undiscoverable facets to the construct. The term has been the focus of many sociolinguists, (Eid, 2003), (Duranti, 2004), (Mahmood, 2006), (Ahearn, 2010), and (Bassiouny, 2014), who are interested in the operations of language within social practice. The scope of past research, to the best of my knowledge, has been confined to the associations of resistance, free will, practices of subordination, and subversion of male dominance outside the scope of the linguistic analysis in the narrative context.

Based on the aforementioned, the primary contribution of the findings lies in the examination of the linguistic constructions to identify new forms of agency in relation to gender identity in a narrative context. In other words, the study has looked into the linguistic and discursive practices by which characters devised their own set of social norms. Findings

of the grammatical and lexical analysis showed common trends as well as anomalies in how the protagonists were able to exercise, deny, attribute, or devise their agency. In addition, findings have also shown how Arabic has common syntactic and semantic features similar to the English language by which traces of agency were identified. Therefore, the implications of this study are:

- **The relation between action and agent:** The grammatical and semantic dissection of the narratives as presented in the analysis section does not only confirm the subject's ability to perform an act that would actually affect others, but also confirms the fact that the agent is tied to the actions by means of constraints, impulses, motivation, intentions, as well as unintended results. A clear example of actions with unintended results is Amina's revenge, in *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need a Man), in which the repercussions were hurtful to her and her family. Therefore, "an action-oriented protagonist...embodies the ideal of self as the agent of change, in control of life occurrences and impervious to obstacles and constraints" (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010, p. 142).
- **Permanence in Time:** The findings of this study demonstrated the evolvement of the agentive identity of four complex female characters, i.e. Amina, Layla, Amina, and Zaynab, within the aspect of time. The analysis of the semantic roles and grammatical agents have rendered significant conclusions. One was the sustenance of characters' agentive type and the second was the changeability of power relations as each character negotiated her status within societal constraints. Therefore, the element of permanence in time emphasizes the fact that the creativity of the subject is "part construction and part discovery". (Ballantyne, 2007, p.137).

- **The Role of Culture:** The perception of the data from a culturist perspective takes us back to the subject position. As Holland (2001) states “linguistic behavior depends upon maneuverings, negotiations, impositions, and recreations of relations of status and entitlement” (p. 13). From that, it can be inferred that the interactions between societies and social actors result in new forms of cultural orientations. For example, Zaynab’s character, who chose to go against all norms and acted on her own impulses. The creative dimension of Zaynab’s agency lies in her production of new norms and values, not generated as a product of cultural inheritance, but for the purpose of being in control of her own. Hence, the intertwining relation between agents and culture lies in the interactions of agents within social situations creating possibilities for novice dimensions of agency.
- **Agency and Narration:** This study provides a different take on agency and gender identity in terms of the transformation of the embodied practices of the protagonists in the narrative context. The findings of this linguistic and discursive analysis have shown a creative process by which the characters reach a new formation of their agency. Such investigations could prompt other research on the dynamic change of the self within the narrative context for a deeper understanding of the durability and performativity of gender identity.
- **Agency and creativity:** The prospect of this linguistic investigation of gender-related novels was to emphasize a different facet of agency associated with identity. In all four novels, the investigation aimed to show how characters devised their own set of actions without necessarily conforming to social norms. Through the dialogic examination, the protagonists were able to

re-appropriate their linguistic repertoire in order to adjust to a new form of reality that trespasses the impositions and constraints of their society. Aspects of love, revenge, self-actualization, and maternal powers have constituted a new prospect for change and evolvement as indicated in the previous analysis in chapter four.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

In terms of limitations, the selection of the purposeful data was one of the major challenges for this study since the novels were extensively large in context. Moreover, the grammatical and semantic dissection posed another difficulty due to the code switching from SA to ECA. Finally, learning Arabic IPA transcription was not an easy process due to lack of training, which slowed down the data analysis process. However, in order to avoid this problem, the analyst was trained in IPA Arabic transcription to facilitate the process and avoid delays.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The context of this study focused on examining the social construct of agency from a linguistic and cultural perspective. In the process, the world of literature has been a convenient vessel by which various character actions and dimensions were easily traced and identified. In pursuit of this study, the analyst adopted four Arabic novels written by Egyptian authors in order to utilize the knowledge of the cultural background for the explanation of the data.

In focusing on the linguistic devices characteristic of agency and gender identity, the analyst, to the best of her knowledge, recommends tackling some areas that have been left unexplored. Since the study has focused on the Arabic language in fiction as a primary source of data, it is recommended to apply the investigation of the linguistic devices with relation to agency in novels written in the English language. History is full of rich text to which we

could analyze authors' and thinkers' perceptions of agency and gender identity as manifested through the world of fiction.

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Appendix I

IPA Arabic Transcription

The transcription symbols used below were extracted from Bassiouney's (2015) "Language and Identity"

Arabic letter	Symbol
أ	ʔ / a / a:
ب	B
ت	T
ث	θ
ج	J / g
ح	ħ
خ	X
د	D
ذ	Ḍ
ر	R
ز	Z
س	S
ش	ʃ
ص	s̰
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	ʕ
غ	Ġ

Arabic letter	Symbol
ف	F
ق	Q
ك	K
ل	L
م	M
ن	N
هـ	H
و	w / u / u:
ي	y / i / i:
ة-	-a
ء	?

Appendix II

Data Coding

Novel Codes:

Novel	Code
<i>Bayna ḡal-qaṣrayn</i> (Palace Walk)	BQ
<i>ḡal-Bāb ḡal-maftūḥ</i> (The Open Door)	BM
<i>ḡu:ri:du rajulan</i> (I Need A Man)	AR
<i>ṣaḡaf</i> (Passion)	SF

Coding of Semantic roles:

Semantic Role	Code
Agent	1
Actor	2
Perceiver	3
Instrument	4
Patient/Undergoer	5

Appendix III

Sample Dialogues

1. *Bayna ʔal-qaṣrayn* (Palace Walk)

- لا تجشم نفسك مشقة الغضب يا سيدى ، كل شىء يهون إلا غضبك ، ما قصدت من ناحيتى إساءة قط ، ولا تخيلها ابنى وهو يحملنى رغبته ببراءة ، ولكنه رجائى بحسن نية فرأيت أن أعرض الأمر عليك ، وما دام هذا هو رأيك فسأبلغه إياه ، وسيدعن له بكل خضوع كما يدعن لأمرك دائما .
- سيدعن أراد أم لم يرد ، ولكنى أريد أن أقول لك إنك أم ضعيفة لا يرجى منها خير .

- سأذهب معك يا نينة لأدلك على الطريق .
وحدجها فهمى بنظرة عطف أثاره فى نفسه ما طالعه فى وجهها البرىء من سرور حائر كسرور الطفل إذا منى بلعبة جديدة فقال لها فى تشجيع واستهانة :
- ألقى نظرة على الدنيا ، لا عليك من هذا فإنى أخاف أن تنسى المشى من طول لزومك للبيت ! . .

- لم ينس شيئا ولم يعف (رددت هذا بأسى دل على عمق حزنها) . .
كان يضممر لى الغضب ويؤجله ريشما أبرأ ، ثم قال لى غادرى بيتى بلا توان . . وقال لى أيضا لا أحب أن أجذك هنا إذا عدت ظهرا (ثم بلهجة تنم عن عتاب أسيف وخيبة أمل) سمعا وطاعة . . سمعا وطاعة .

2. *ʔal-Bāb ʔal-maftūh* (The Open Door)

وقرعت أمها الباب قرعا خفيفا وهمست :

• افتحي يا ليلي •

وتوقفت ليلي في • سط الحجرة وغطت وجهها بيديها ••

– أروح فين ؟ لو قفلت ميت باب مش حايبعدوا عنى ، دايم ويايا ،
دلوقت ويايا حتى والباب مقفول ، دايم ويايا ، أبويا وأمى ويايا ، على
نفسى على صدرى ، ولا دقيقة أنسى ولا دقيقة أحلم ولا دقيقة أفكر فى
شئ تانى ولا دقيقة لى ، دايم أنا وهم والحقيقة ، الحقيقة الكئيبة ، أنا
وهم على جسمى الممدود فى الصالة •

– أنا مش ملكك ولا ملك أى انسان ، أنا حره • فاهم ؟

وانقض عليها عصام وقد اربد وجهه • وبدأت بينهما معركة عنيفة
صامتة ثم تمكن عصام منها وألقاها ممددة فوق الارىكة •• وجسم عصام
كالصخرة فوق جسمها ويداه تطوقان ذراعيها كظوقين من الحديد وفمه
اللزج فوق عينيها فوق فمها فوق رقبتها فوق صدرها •• ودقات أقدام
تدب فى السطح وزغاريد وموسيقى وحرارة تلهب وجهها وجسمها

وقال حسين فى شئ من الاستنكار :

– دى مش أول مرة تسألينى السؤال ده ياليلي •

وابتسمت ليلي ابتسامة خفيفة واستدارت تواجهه وهى تقول :

– دا مش سؤال يا حسين ، أنا با أقرر حقيقه •

وسارت فى خطوات هادئة الى مقعد مواجه لحسين وجلست •

وتركزت نظرة حسين على وجه ليلي ، وجذب انتباهه شئ ام يره قط
فى عينيها حتى وهى فى أوجها •• مزيج من الاعتداد المطمئن ، ذلك المزيج
العجيب النادر الذى لا ينعكس الا فى عيني انسان وجد طريقه ، وعرف
بتجربته أنه من القوة ، بحيث يستطيع دائما أن يقف الى جانب ما يعتقد
أنه الصواب •

3. *ʔu:ri:du rajulan* (I Need A Man)

قال سليم في لوعة إن الحياة بدوني ليست حياة . . الحياة
بدون حب ليست حياة . . سأنتظر الأشهر الستة القادمة . .
سأستمتع فيها بإرضاع نور . . سأستمتع فيها بتدليل شهد . .
لكنني لن أتوقف أبداً عن المحاولة . . لو أصبح عندي عشر
بنات سيأتي يوم وأهدي إلى سليم ولداً . .
أمي:
ما زال الصبر يا أمي دواءنا جميعاً . . وسيبقى الحب
والأمل عكازنا!

اتحرمت من العم والأخ عشان كدا . . ما كانش ممكن أحرم
نفسي من الابن وأحرم بناتي من الأخ . . عارف لو العيب فيا
أنا . . كنت قلتلك تتجوز . . لكن مافيش حل ثاني . .
وصممت أمينة لحظة لتبتلع دمة لاحت في عينيها ثم قالت
في حدة وهي تنظر في عينيه:
أنا عايزة راجل . . راجل يا سليم يا عبد المجيد!!

وبشيء من التحسّر المرّ، تابع:
أنت كمان يا أمينة انتصرت . . خدت بتارك . . دبحتيني
ودبحت بناتنا . . وصلت صرختك للعالم كله . . أغلى حريم في
حياتي انتصروا يا أمينة وببيدي أنا بس عارفة على إيه؟! على
جثتي . . وعشان على جثتي . . مش حيفرحوا بحلمهم مش
حيحسوا بيه . . زي ما قلتلك الحلم بتاع كل واحد مسؤوليته لو

4. *faḡaf* (Passion)

- عليه مشترياتها، وأخذت تعالين ما اشترته ابنتها، ووبختها قائلة:
- يا الله! ما تلك الألوان الفاقعة؟! وهذا القماش الذي يكشف أكثر مما يستر؟! هل جنت؟! زينب ابنة الشيخ البكري ترتدي مثل هذه الأشياء؟ أم أنك تريدين أن تأتي على سيرتنا الألسن؟! – أمي.. بالله عليك لمرة واحدة انسي أو تناسي أنني ابنة الشيخ البكري، أنا زينب.. أفعل ما يحلو لي، وأرتدي ما يعجبني، ثم
-

توجّهت إليها وصافحتها، فعرفت ما مدام أنجيل إلى السيدات اللاتي يشاركنها المائدة، سيدات من صفوة المجتمع؛ زوجات وبنات كبار التجار والقناصل وأعضاء الهيئات الدبلوماسية الذين يعيشون بالبلاد، كنّ ينظرن إليها باستغراب غير مصدّقات أنها ابنة البكري، وأخذن يرطنن بالجريكي والإيطالي حتى لا تفهم، وعندما قالت إحداهن بالفرنسية (لا أصدق هل هذه ابنة شيخ أزهرى كيف سمح أبوها بأن تخلع عباءتها؟) ردّت زينب عليها، (لا أرى أي مشكلة في أن أخلع عباءتي، وأبي ليس له علاقة في ذلك، هذه إرادتي الخاصة) ما أثار دهشة الجميع، فالأمر لا يتوقف فقط على الملابس، ها هي تفهم الفرنسية وتحدّثها أيضاً.

- ألن تفيقي من أحلامك بعد؟ ألا يكفيك ما صنعت بنا، لقد جعلت سيرتنا على كل الألسن.
- بعينين واسعتين جريئتين تطلّعت إليها..
- لا لن أفيق من أحلامي، هل بإمكانك أن تحاسبيني على أحلامي؟ دعيني أحلم.